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MY TOWER
IN
DESMOND

BY

S. R. LYSAGHT

WITH A FRONTISPIECE

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON
1927

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DEDICATED

TO

MY WIFE

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CHAPTER I

OUR HOME

I

For most of us there is some particular spot which is the centre of the universe—some fixed locality, not necessarily the home for the time being, round which we weave our romances, from which we set out on our adventures, and to which our fancies return. You may test it by the pictures you make of the places you read of in stories. The descriptive details may be all unlike; the county, even the country may be different; and yet you will find yourself setting the characters of the book in the scene you have made the home of your imagination; varying it somewhat, adding perhaps a wing to the house, new features to the landscape; but still, to your annoyance it may be, using and transfiguring the same old picture.

So it has been for me with Ballyquin, the home of my ancestors, where I lived when a child and left when a young man. When I was as far away from it as the breadth of the earth makes possible, it remained the centre of my

universe; when I now think of the great world it is not the world I found, but one that is still undiscovered beyond our old horizons; and even as I once imagined that Jacob's ladder, extending to Heaven, touched the earth at the end of our haggard beyond the farmyard, so every pathway to the Infinite has begun for me in the shelter of those familiar boundaries.

In the measureless universe what a comfort there is in boundaries! They make the home: the nearer they are the more secure they make it, and the man of great estates and many residences may lose much that belongs to him whose garden fence encloses his possessions. In childhood we have narrow boundaries and great horizons: as we grow older the boundaries become wider and the horizons are nearer. On a winter twilight, when the wind was blowing and the coming darkness was full of mystery, our boundaries were narrowed to the limits of the courtyard and farm-buildings. Within we felt safe, and there was a splendid feeling of our security in contrast to the doubt and unknown dangers of the world beyond. When the last cart had come in and the big gate had been bolted, when the men had gone home and the farm buildings were quiet, and all was dark except for gleams from the steward's cottage window or the moving lantern of the shepherd still busy in the outlying sheds—then we would go round the place feeling like the inmates of a fortress, visiting outposts, picturing imaginary enemies, human or ghostly, hiding in the shadow of a buttress or gliding

through the dark shrubbery walks. At other times our boundaries were wider. They extended on one side to the fields beyond the park where the river ran through sedgy banks from a little lough, and on the other side to the great wood, the limits of which in those days we had never found. I speak of *those days* meaning that immense expanse of time which lies behind my eleventh or twelfth year. It has no measure, it mingles with the infinite; and if I try to go back to my earliest recollections, one of which was a cornfield where men were reaping and I had made a cave inside a stook of oats, while my mother sat on a sheaf and was singing to me a rhyme which began—

> Oranges and lemons
> Said the bells of St. Clement's,

or another, when we were at some seaside place and I was carried out at night wrapped in shawls to see a comet, and I smelt the seaweed and heard people's voices blown away on the wind—these earliest recollections are not like beginnings, but seem to merge into some other period behind them which I have forgotten.

In those young days and until we became really self-conscious we were a part of everything we saw. Imagination and sympathy gave us keys to the secrets of life. We did not look at or reflect on the scenes around us; we absorbed them, or they us. We flew with the swallow or went foraging with the mouse; we hunted rabbits with the terrier or shot into a hole with

the rabbit; we did more than watch the horses, comfortably stabled after the day's work: we *were* the horses, and the straw was our bed. With people it was the same. We lived the lives of those we knew and liked or loved. We cared nothing for their position or abilities—on the whole our preference being for those of humble rank, shepherds, ploughmen, and the like. We knew their hearts. For instance, there was Davy Ray, the itinerant harness-maker, whom we used to sit with in the coach-house on wet days. While he was working away, waxing his thread, drawing his double needles out at arm's length, or punching holes in leather straps, he told us interesting gossip about every one in the neighbourhood, and used strange oaths, one of which, *Blood alive!* we specially liked and afterwards received punishment for adopting. My grandfather and other local gentlemen used to say that though he was not a bad workman he was an old humbug and a liar. What if he were? He had a kind heart and was friendly to us, and we knew him better than we knew most of our relations. I see now that our seniors did not know him: they knew little details about him—his lying for instance—and ignored his humanity. Grown-up people seem to judge each other as they judge horses and dogs, appraising them by their breeding or cleverness: children also judge people as they do dogs, but they estimate dogs, not by their points, but by the kindness of their faces and their companionability. Ned Murphy, the ploughman, was another. We knew him

better than we knew almost any one, and he hardly ever spoke a word. He was an immense rough fellow with a very handsome face; he wore old-fashioned knee-breeches and grey stockings, and smelt of turf smoke; he was a link between us and the earth; we followed him at the plough, we watched him stable his horses, and often sat round the fire in his cottage among his innumerable children. Knowledge of the earth's secrets seemed to pass from him to us without speech, in his smile or his smell. We loved him in the same way that we loved our favourite dogs. He had nine children, the youngest a baby, and his pay was nine shillings a week. I met the baby again by chance in the lift of the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. The conductor, a gorgeously attired young man in a uniform which was something between that of an Austrian Field-Marshal and a Portuguese Admiral, had an unmistakable County Cork accent, and on comparing notes I discovered that he was Ned Murphy's baby and that his wages were seventy shillings a week—eight times as much as his father, a skilled ploughman, could earn. But what a life in comparison! He was already spoilt in many ways; he seasoned the occupation of a flunkey with a sort of spurious independence of manner; he had not perhaps lost his love of the old country, but he spoke of it and the people at home patronisingly, and in his gorgeous clothes he made a ridiculous figure. I expect there is hardly to be found in the world so great a change in circumstances as that which

is constantly taking place in the lives of Irish peasants who go from remote villages and mountain homes to the noisy modernity of an American city.

Davy Ray is dead long ago, but old Ned Murphy is still alive, and I had a talk with him only last week. I have specially mentioned these two, but we had many other no less valued friends among the workpeople — Casey, the coachman, who taught us to ride; and Johnny Roche, the gardener, a dour dogmatic fellow, but kind withal, who informed us that it was good manners for the person arriving on the scene to be the first to greet one already there, and when he was at work insisted on our saying good-morning to him before he spoke to us; and Tom Connors, the carpenter, who could make anything in wood, from a cart to a coffin, and in whose shed amid shavings and sawdust we spent many a happy hour. We knew these people as our elders could not. And not only did our imaginative sympathy link our lives with those of people and animals, it almost incorporated us into the places around us. Our home was something more than the centre of our universe, it became an expanded outward expression of the spirit within us. In every bit of rude rock-work or stubborn vegetation in those first gardens we could call our own at the back of the shrubbery, it was ourselves we planted, our own hearts that blossomed. Since we have grown up we have seen many striking and beautiful scenes which have strongly impressed us — a thunderstorm in

the tropics, a hero's funeral, Niagara—we may instance a dozen, and they are so vivid we can readily recall them to the mind's eye, we can revisit them in fancy; but compare the picture with that of a scene in your childhood—a rainy day in winter, for instance, and the barn in the old farmyard full of workpeople, while the threshing machine was humming and the winnowed chaff flew out against the grey sky. You do not look on that picture as you do on the other, standing away from it: you *are* that scene; it is part of yourself. In those early unself-conscious days we were more than living beings—we were Life.

I am anxious to show you our old home at Ballyquin, not as you would see it as a visitor, but with our eyes. The remembrance of your own enchanted ground which is elsewhere will make you understand that the house was not, as you might have hastily concluded, a very ordinary one of the usual rectangular Irish pattern, furnished with no suspicion of artistic care ; you will know that such details are unimportant. In the long dark dining-room you will not notice that the walls are damp nor stop to look at some fine old pieces of silver on the sideboard; but you will see a jolly company round the table and recall the flavour of simple foods, home-made bread and cakes, of Kerry beef, of geese stuffed with potatoes, and of apple pies—flavours that the world no longer gives you. Others, then unperceived, may have been since provided—certain bouquets of claret and hock, or piquancies of oriental pickles, but

the old ones are not what they were. You will recall with us the romance of hunger and understand our appreciation of its shrine. In the drawing-room you will not look for water-colours by distinguished artists, but delight in the wool-work tapestry, one representing the Giaour, the other a Spanish dancer with tambourine, set in mahogany frames, the work of a deceased great-aunt; and you will admire the prismatic colours in the glass chandelier and look with affection on the merry old lady, our grandmother, who is welcoming her guests with such real pleasure. You will appreciate the different levels of the floors, the number of corridors, and the magnificent nooks and corners for playing hide-and-seek; and you will find another room where the smells are even better than in the dining-room, fragrance of ginger cordial, honey, preserved fruits, sponge cake, lavender, cloves, and other things in our grandmother's still-room, which make appeal to your nostrils in one melliloquent harmony. But perhaps the best room of all was Uncle de Courcy's workshop. On its shelves and benches and floor, or suspended from its ceiling, was every sort of store used on a farm—paint, tar, nails, ploughshares, harrow teeth, medicine for cattle, and a collection of fragments of machinery, some of which we occasionally received as presents. They were most of them useless to us, but our uncle had an extraordinary power of giving them an imaginary value, and a few of them—I remember an obsolete spit which worked by a handle and set many wheels in motion—were real possessions.

Uncle de Courcy was my grandfather's only son and the heir to the property. He was generally considered to be 'not all there,' 'not quite right' —'a case of arrested development' we heard later—and certainly he was not like the other gentlemen we knew; but he was the most delightful creature in the world, and in practical ability, from curing a sick cow to mending a seed drill, he was without an equal in the county. His workshop was a palace of delight to us. It was the work the place indicated that was the fascination, for I am convinced that to boys the primitive work of the world is even more engrossing than play. It *is* play. Haymaking, threshing, sheep-dipping in the river—to be a part of these great events, to hear the consultation previously, and then to take some small part in the work ourselves—this was even better than cricket. To assist in building a plank bridge across a stream, even if our part only consisted in holding a box of nails; to ride a cart horse down to water at the end of the day, or to sit with the shepherds round a wood fire near the huts in the lambing season, feeling all the while that something was being done that had to be done, and enjoying every detail of it—that was even better than games: we came nearer the secret of happiness; the material for our play was not bat and ball, but the whole creation.

What we regarded as work was lessons, the reason being that they were disconnected from reality and imagination. Mr. Butler, our tutor, taught us 'rudiments' which we were unable to

connect with anything of interest or use. I think there is a great deal to be said for the method of Mr. Squeers, and that because of his limitations he has been unfairly judged as a teacher. 'Spell window; WINDER, now go and clean it,' and so on, showed an appreciation of the connection between knowledge and life. When we were taught sums in *weights and measures* we loathed them; but with a prospect of being afterwards entrusted with the weighing of the rolled fleeces or sacks of oats that passed over the scales in the yard I am sure we should have been eager to fit ourselves for the task, although I admit it would have been harder to connect our Latin and Greek declensions with vital interests.

Work is the most interesting thing in life (except love-making, which is but a temporary occupation, and the better forms of sport, which are but specialised survivals of primitive labour) when its object, not its price, concerns us; but it becomes a burden when we cannot see or are dissociated from its aim. That is why so much of the work in factories had become an evil to be borne instead of an inspiriting exercise; that is why the merchant's work, apart from the stimulus of competition or acquisition, is in itself dreary, while the architect's or doctor's is engrossing; and that is why Ned Murphy, ploughing the land at nine shillings a week, possessed a freedom which had been taken from his son, who spent his days ascending and descending in the lift for high wages. Nature compels no labour on man that does not strengthen him: it is the tasks which men

impose on each other and the burden of mechanical toil which are the curse. But my uncle's workshop is leading me to digressions, and I must forget my quarrel with our modern industrial conditions for awhile, and be glad to remember that my first impressions of work showed it to me as one of the happiest things in the world.

II

Children are nearly always interested in their elders and curious about their past lives. They are also clever at putting questions on these matters, and without scruple in their further interrogation of old servants with whom they are in alliance. Thus we learned more than we were intended to know about our relations: how it came about that our gallant and wicked grandfather should have married a homely old lady like our grandmother, how Uncle de Courcy got into disgrace about a love affair, and how Aunt Isabel, Brian's mother, eloped and was disowned by her parents. She was the second daughter, my mother the eldest, and my father was her distant cousin, a soldier who died in India when I was three years old and my brother Bob a baby. She then came with us to live with our grandparents at Ballyquin and died before my sixth birthday.

Margretta, our youngest aunt, was only five years older than myself. She was the person I loved most in the world. She was young enough to understand us and sympathise with our lawless-

ness, and old enough to be our champion when we were in danger of disgrace. And she was comely looking and always jolly and good-tempered. She was everything that a boy likes and loves.

We had some relations about ten miles away, the Nagles at Temple Mary, where there were boys and girls about our own age, with whom we used to exchange visits occasionally. The only other relatives we knew of were the Falcons, rich cousins living in England, whom we had never seen, and old Uncle Tom, Dr. Quin, our grandfather's brother, who was an eye doctor in Dublin and a great wag. He came to Ballyquin once or twice, and I remember my surprise that he wasn't afraid of my grandfather and even made jokes about him. He must have been wanting in a high moral sense, for he used to encourage us in breaking rules and using forbidden words, and taught us and Uncle de Courcy the following way of addressing a stranger—

> How would you like to be powdered and shaved,
> And the skin of your rump drawn over your head,
> And your belly whitewashed,
> And a cabbage stump stuck to your poll?

I heard that he married a rich American lady whom he cured of a squint, but he quarrelled with my grandfather and we saw him no more.

My grandfather was the dominant figure in our household and in my early life. We feared him, most people did, and in spite of this we sometimes loved him: sometimes we hated him. He seemed too young to be our grandfather; he was

remarkably handsome, of the type I afterwards heard called Byronic, and though he was always well dressed and kept his hair short he looked more like a poet than a squire. We believed, not without reason, that he was one of the cleverest people in the world. He could make poetry and compose music and paint pictures. He painted portraits of my mother and my aunts when they were young girls, which every one admired, and one of my grandmother, which was just like her but made her look ridiculous, and one of himself (done before a mirror), wearing a sort of mantle with an open fur collar that made him look more handsome than he really was. He was a classical scholar and sometimes he used to read Homer to us, with a waving arm and a voice like rolling seas and booming wind, which awed and delighted us though we did not comprehend a word of the meaning. When we were older we were puzzled to understand why he should have married our grandmother, who, though a dear old lady, had a dumpy figure, no intellectual or artistic tastes, and was several years his senior; and it was only when we knew that he was in debt at the time and she an heiress that we were enlightened. Their first meeting, however, was of a romantic nature though it appeared comical too, as we heard it related by my grandmother. It seemed that she slipped into the water as she was landing from the Bristol packet at Passage near Cork and was in danger of drowning. The young man standing on the quay, who saw the lady, head under, legs in the air, and plunged to the rescue, was my

grandfather, and ' 'twas love at first sight ' as she said innocently. The marriage was not exactly unhappy for they were always good friends. She had a generous nature and forgave him some conduct which would have broken the heart of a more sensitive woman and made a prouder woman leave him. She took his infidelities and outbursts of violence with amazing calmness, and only once do I remember seeing her really unhappy, and that was when my grandfather laid his horsewhip on the back of poor Uncle de Courcy when he discovered that he was about to marry the young and good-looking widow Lancy, who kept a public house in Mallow, a woman, who, taking advantage of his weakness of mind and hoping to become his wife, had made him an unwilling father. These circumstances we found out from Davy Ray and other allies among the workpeople, but the horse-whipping we saw. The marriage did not take place, and Uncle de Courcy may have been thankful, but it was an awful thing to see a grown man flogged by his father, and my grandmother was very miserable about it.

It must have been a great disappointment to my grandfather that his only son should be deficient in mind; and hardly a less trial that his second daughter should defy him and run away with a man whom he detested. For us Aunt Isabel's name was surrounded with romance. Our grandparents never mentioned her, but Aunt Margretta would tell us of the beauty which made every one fall in love with her and of her cleverness, and how wonderfully she could play

the violin. We were allowed to know that she had made a runaway match, and that her boy, Brian, was about my own age, and that they had gone to live in South Africa, but it was long before I heard the full story. Mr. Hercules Barry was a man she had met on the hunting field and had been forbidden to know by her father. He was a handsome amusing fellow it seems, the son of an attorney in Cork, 'no match at all for Miss Isabel' was the only comment I could get from our silent friend, Ned Murphy; but the sympathies of the people were with her, because Barry was a Nationalist and a Catholic, and she had defied her father, who was openly hostile to Irish national sentiment. Barry, finding the law dismal, took first to horse-coping and then to journalism, and in the last capacity he showed talent. He was said to be one of the raciest speakers that ever addressed a mob. He had the courage, too, of his sentiments, and in defiance of British authority his oratory earned him six months in Kilmainham. How Aunt Isabel and Brian lived during this time I never heard, but though they suffered great privations she refused her father's offer to return to Ballyquin. On Barry's release they found means to emigrate to South Africa, where he in turn worked on a mine, acted as overseer on a Boer farm in Natal, and edited an anti-British newspaper, while I believe my aunt gave music lessons. His death led to the event which stands out among the clearest in my childhood's recollections—the coming to Ballyquin of my aunt and Brian.

The preparations for their arrival, the repapering of one of the unused bedrooms, the provision of a bed in my room for Brian, and the tuning of the piano, filled us with excitement, and every one about the place was interested. On the afternoon of their arrival Bob and I hid in a secret lair which we had made in an oak tree on the avenue where we could watch them drive up without being seen, but we only got a glimpse of a young-looking lady in black and a boy with a sort of frown on his face as if he had made up his mind to face something he did not like or was nervous about. We were shy when we met, and so was he. When the time came for our introduction they were all in the drawing-room; my grandmother was laughing, Aunt Margretta was crying, and Aunt Isabel was the only person who seemed quite calm. We were allowed that evening to come to late dinner to celebrate the home-coming. My grandfather, I remember, was in great spirits, and did what he could to make every one jolly, though he twice threatened to send Uncle de Courcy from the table, first for pulling a wishing-bone with Brian and then for laughing with his mouth full of claret.

We sat silent and listened to the conversation of our elders, which was less interesting than we expected. Aunt Isabel asked a few casual questions about the neighbours, but nothing was said about South Africa and their adventures there. I felt sure at once that I liked Brian because I liked his face. He was good-looking and rather pale, and had dark eyes and a sort of

plucky appearance. I don't think he smiled once that night, but afterwards when we knew him and he smiled his face seemed to alter. Of course, as we found out afterwards, he knew all about his father and his grandfather's hostility to him.

But it was not the dinner-time that evening, but the hour afterwards that remains so clearly fixed in my memory. We had escaped to our den with Brian and our orders to come to the drawing-room were unexpected. No one was talking when we came in, but my grandfather was sitting at the piano and Aunt Isabel was examining her violin. We took seats as if we had been in church, and I could not help noticing the look of troubled excitement on Brian's face. Aunt Margretta told us afterwards that my grandfather had set his heart on having some of the old music, and when he desired a thing he was always inconsiderate. It did not seem to occur to him that Aunt Isabel was not likely to be in the mood for it, and was out of practice, but she made no objection. She seemed indeed to be indifferent about everything. After a little tuning up they played something my grandfather chose, I think from an Italian opera, and I thought my aunt's performance was marvellous, though I did not care much for the music. 'Bravo!' he cried when they finished, 'Bravo! Your hand has lost nothing, and your ear was always perfect. Now choose something yourself.' She picked out a selection of old Irish melodies and then the spell descended on us. I knew them, I had heard Tim Coghlan, the fiddler, play them, but what was that to this?

This was the first time in my life I had felt the magic of art, and something new yet not unexpected, something wonderful but not strange, was brought into my world. *The valley lay smiling before me* were the words I connected with the air, but no valley I had ever seen was half so beautiful as that which shone before us while she was playing. We were all very quiet when it was ended, and Brian's lips were set tight and he was frowning harder than ever. I watched her playing with her head thrown back a little and her cheek flushed, and her beauty seemed part of the music. It affected me in a way I could not possibly understand at the time, and I remember having no surprise, rather a feeling of something expected, when after she had finished she hid her face in the cushion of the sofa beside Brian and cried. Of course we had no more music that night, and with a feeling of shame, perhaps common to boys, in having witnessed an emotional scene, I was glad to get away and take Brian to see my blue terrier pups.

Those long days of the early summer were not long enough for us, there was so much I had to show Brian, so many people to introduce him to. Mr. Butler, our tutor, was away on a holiday, we were left very much to ourselves, and from the early morning, when we went down to bathe in the river, until bedtime we were occupied in visiting my favourite haunts and making new explorations. Brian was doubly interested because he had heard of so many of the places and people from his mother; and sometimes, as when I showed him

the ruined castle tower rising out of the water at the point where the river ran from the lough, he would say, 'That's just what I pictured it, only 'tis better'; and at others, as when I took him to the great wood, to me a haunted place full of mystery, he was unimpressed and told me about the bush in Natal where there were snakes and monkeys. He shared my interest in the work of the place, and whenever there was anything of special moment going on—sheep-washing in the river, blasting in the quarry, or picking out the cattle for a fair we were sure to be found. As he knew so many things of which I was ignorant—he could swim and knew all the names of the sails in a full-rigged ship—I was glad he could not ride and enjoyed the importance of being his teacher. I was also able to tell him a good deal about bird's nests and gave him some of my eggs for the beginning of his collection. In the cottages on the place, all of which we visited, the knowledge of his father's history, his imprisonment as a rebel, and his misfortunes would alone have ensured him a welcome, and his pleasant friendly way with the people speedily won their affection. I think it was a good proof of our real friendship that I felt no jealousy of his popularity.

Then came the winter, which had nearly as many attractions as the summer, and was a new wonder to Brian, who was too young when he left Ireland to remember the long dark evenings and the leafless trees and the frost. There was a winter friendliness about the busy yards and the carpenter's shed and Uncle de Courcy's workshop,

and on wet days when we were threshing, the barn was the pleasantest place in the world. Sometimes Uncle de Courcy took us with him when he went out shooting, when we either walked the bog for snipe or took the boat and hid in the reeds on the lough beyond the castle waiting for wild duck. On these days we always had tea with him afterwards in the gunroom, the dogs with us lying before the fire, and he would tell us fine shooting stories and fill us with expectations of promised expeditions in a year or two when we would be allowed to have guns ourselves.

On those winter afternoons between tea and dinner-time Aunt Isabel used to read aloud to my grandmother and Aunt Margretta, in the drawing-room, and now and then we would steal in and listen. They were ' grown-up ' books of course, but we understood a great deal of what we heard, and I remember being much excited by parts of *Hard Cash* and *Lady Audley's Secret*. Aunt Isabel used to read to us also, nor have I since found any romances comparable with those she discovered to us, and unless it be *The O'Donoghue*, which I did not read till a year or two afterwards, *Ivanhoe* and *The Talisman* remained unrivalled in my affections. I keep them as a memory. I am afraid to read them again lest I should find that their romance had departed with my own childhood.

III

Beyond our stronghold of walls and farm buildings, which gave us so pleasant a sense o

security on darkening evenings, our boundaries were marked on one side by the river, on another by the road which passed the lodge, and to the west by the edge of the great wood whose end we had never found. Home was within these enclosures: outside was a half familiar country which contained the houses of relatives and friends, the town of Mallow and villages that we sometimes visited: beyond this country, in all directions, were horizons of distant mountains, and beyond again the unknown world. Somewhere over those horizons were England and Europe, India, where our father died, the battle-field of Waterloo, Robinson Crusoe's island, the Holy Land, and the places we had read of in books. The Holy Land I perhaps should not have included, as I believe I thought it was somewhere outside the world, or fancied, like the friends of the notable Buck Whaley, that it had ceased to exist. He won a wager of twelve thousand pounds in the year 1788 by visiting Jerusalem and bringing back honest proofs to his sceptical circle in Dublin that the place was still standing; and if you are not already acquainted with the memoirs in which he describes his perilous journey you will find them pleasant reading.

Mallow always seemed to me a very important town, but Brian, who had seen London and Cape Town, did not think much of it. No doubt a hundred years ago, when it was a fashionable spa and the county people had houses in the main street, it was a gay spot; but when Brian, who had heard his father sing *The Rakes of Mallow*, asked

me to show him some of the rakes, all I could do was to point out some elderly gentlemen with side-whiskers standing on the steps of the Club.

When we went to Mallow we would call at the Bank, and the grocer's, and at Dr. Riordan's, and Joey John's. Dr. Riordan kept an apothecary's shop where we bought tooth powder and sheep dip, and at Joey John's we got shot for our catapults; and sometimes Mr. Comber, the baker, who was a great scholar, would recite poetry to us when we called for bread, and sometimes Cracked Barrett would talk to us as we sat on the side car outside some shop, and once he spat on me for luck.

Our expeditions to Temple Mary, where our cousins the Nagles lived, were exciting events. We had an old-fashioned coach with a glass front and a dickey behind, into which the whole family except our grandfather were stowed on these occasions. There were six cousins, all of whom we liked except James, who was a couple of years older than I and who gave himself airs because he was at a public school in England and had a gun. The girls were as good as boys and joined in all our sport, riding races on the donkeys, playing cricket, and ratting with the terriers. Alice was my favourite, and I suppose I must have been in love with her as I remember feeling a pang of jealousy one day when we had each been given a peach and Brian swopped with her, her own being much the smaller, and I was angry with myself for not having thought of it first.

It was a peach that led to a disturbance of the peace on one of our visits. My brother Bob had

a love of fruit which amounted to a passion, though in other directions he was not in the least greedy. James, home for the summer holidays, was in possession of two or three peaches, for one of which Bob begged, and James agreed to give him one on condition that he would bow down and worship him. This we found him in the act of doing, to my great amusement and Brian's indignation. 'Get up, you little worm,' he said, after hearing Bob's explanation. 'Fancy any one bowing down and worshipping a thing like that.' Whereupon James hit Brian a smack on the head and there was a fight. James was a bigger boy, but Brian was strong and hard and had had fights before in South Africa. Of course he did not get the best of it but he held his own, and it ended in a drawn battle when Aunt Margretta came on the scene. We became much better friends with James afterwards, and he gave up asking offensive questions, such as who cut our hair and made our clothes. We had refused to gratify his curiosity on these points, but to my readers I will admit that Bill Casey, the coachman, cut our hair, and old Gough, the itinerant tailor, made our clothes. We witnessed the whole proceeding: a roll of cloth was bought and then old Gough came to Ballyquin for a week or two and worked in one of the empty rooms sitting cross-legged on the floor. I have never heard of another itinerant tailor since he died, so I suppose he was the last of the trade.

Sunday brought another regular excursion beyond our boundaries. We had a long drive to

Kilmulla, where there was a family pew in the church and a vault in the churchyard. The English families, who received grants of land or settled in Ireland since the Reformation, were mostly Protestant, but ours was an old Irish family, and I suppose like so many others changed their faith to save the property. As a child it used to perplex me that nearly all the gentle-people went to church and the poor people to Mass. We were taught that it was wrong to be a Roman Catholic, but we were also taught that Christ loved the poor. I perceived something illogical here. When I was older I felt some contempt for my ancestors who changed their faith for the sake of material advantages, but I may have been unfair to them also. Probably the educated classes in touch with England and Europe were influenced by the movement which did not reach the people. It is perhaps as well it did not, for they remain to-day the only people I know who have real faith in God. Are they also destined to lose it when they have more of the world's knowledge? or will the world in time discover the barrenness of its unbelief and be turned through fuller knowledge to a faith which our poor and simple people have never doubted? But that question had no place in my thoughts then.

With half-a-dozen exceptions the whole congregation at Kilmulla was composed of the families of the country gentlemen of the neighbourhood. They used to drive up about quarter of an hour before the service began, and talk together

among the tombs about the crops and the fairs and the meets of the Duhallow hunt. It was a very pleasant meeting-place, filled with sunshine and yet guarded by trees, with the Castle over the wall and the River Aubeg, Spenser's Mulla, singing on its winding way just below the quiet graves.

While we were at church Aunt Isabel and Brian used to go to Mass. I knew this was displeasing to our grandfather — although, I believe, he had no religion—but there had been a compact about it when they came home and the subject was not afterwards discussed. Brian and I used to have arguments about the merits of our respective churches, and we agreed to exchange visits of worship when the absence of our elders made it possible. One Sunday I went with him to Mass, and a few weeks later he came to church with me. I had to admit that his sermon beat ours. The priest was preaching about the ignorance of spiritual matters which still exists in our midst, and described a conversation he had had a few days previously with a poor woman from the mountains whom he had met in the street. 'Tell me, ma'am,' said he, 'how many Gods there are?' She was clearly puzzled but was ready with her answer. 'Sure, I wouldn't be counting them at all, yer reverence,' she replied, and her answer made every one in the congregation laugh, and caused his sermon to be the only one of the hundreds I heard in my childhood which I can remember. I had also to allow that there was more earnestness and

enthusiasm in his church than in mine; but of course they had a large congregation and we had a small one, so small that Canon Coffey, the clergyman, announced before the offertory that last week's collection had not been enough to pay the caretaker's expenses. I thought it very generous of Brian, who belonged to another church, to put half-a-crown, almost the whole of his remaining pocket money, into the plate, but he said it was the proper thing for a guest to do. On the whole, I preferred our service, and he conceded that there was a fine sound like poetry in some of the prayers. I was unfortunate in not being able to give him a good hymn that day like 'Greenland's Icy Mountains,' full of pleasant pictures of arctic regions, coral strands, and tropical islands; but, as my guest, he was quite polite about the dull things we provided. When I was older I discovered that its hymnal is a discredit to the Established Church, and hardly contains a verse outside 'Lead, kindly Light' that is worthy to be included in an anthology of English poetry. Take such a verse as this:

> The fish in wave, the bird on wing,
> God bade the waters bear,
> Each for our mortal body's food
> His gracious hands prepare.

What an anticlimax after hearing rolled out such lines as these: 'We have heard with our ears, O Lord, our fathers have declared unto us the noble works which Thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them.'

But though I cannot remember the sermons of my childhood I am sure that going to church was good for us. And what better place is there for dreaming and imagining. Though I do not pretend that I was not glad when the service was over, I have the happiest recollections of my own thoughts in church, when the door was open in summer and you heard the sound of the wind in the trees outside, while the Litany was being intoned; or you saw the colours from the stained-glass window thrown by shafts of sunlight on the altar steps during the sermon.

My life had been very happy before Brian arrived: it became more interesting afterwards. He led us in adventures, in explorations, and in mischief, and we generally had our fun without detection. Once we were caught, or rather had to surrender. At this period we all went to a Mr. Coppinger's preparatory school in Mallow. Sometimes we drove in, sometimes, whenever there were horses to spare, we rode in. One day in November when we were riding in, Bob on a pony, Brian on a big grey horse that had been a hunter and was now used in harness, and I on a little thoroughbred mare about twenty years old, there was a meet of the Duhallow hounds at a place we were passing. The fox had gone out of the far end of the cover and the hounds were getting to work. It was a tantalising sight. 'Come along, Nick,' cried Brian. 'Come along, Bob,' and off we went without hesitation. Our old hunters knew the game, and both Brian and I had one of the great days of our lives. We

saw two of the best runs of the season and had the satisfaction of showing off before Miss Stella Fitzgibbon, a young lady we both greatly admired. How Bob scrambled along I don't know, but he stuck to it and we all returned home together in the afternoon at our usual time.

The question then arose whether we were to own up or tell lies, and out of it came the first of our many ethical discussions.

'We've had our fun,' I said, 'so let's take the consequences. We may get off light. Besides we shall probably be found out any way.'

'Noble boys!' said Brian sarcastically, 'we tell the truth because we think we shall be found out.'

'It shows funk to tell lies,' I replied, nettled at his tone.

'No,' said he, 'it shows funk to tell the truth. It shows you're afraid to take a risk.'

'Lies are mean,' I protested.

'Only when you let some one else in,' he returned.

'They're mean when people trust you.'

'Coppinger don't trust us.'

'Yes,' I admitted, 'we might lie to him, but what about our own people?'

'Mother's away,' he replied evasively.

'But what can we tell Coppinger?'

'That it was Aunt Margretta's birthday.'

'It wasn't.'

'And she gave us a holiday—he admires her.'

'We'd have to take a note from her,' I said, agreeing to the compromise.

I have never met a more honourable person than Brian—a mean thing he would not do, but I am not sure he was not right in holding that among boys truthfulness is no sign of courage. We submitted the case to Margretta, who, perhaps because she knew of Coppinger's admiration, refused to ask him a favour and made us go to our grandfather and confess.

We got no punishment at all, and took a letter from him next day to old Coppinger saying we had been given a holiday, but we had to make a promise never to repeat the offence. It was one of the occasions when I loved my grandfather.

In describing the surroundings of our childhood I have kept to the last the place that interested me most, the castle tower and the ruins of Ballyquin Abbey. They actually belonged to myself, the land on which they stood having been my father's property, not part of my grandfather's estate. They stood on a plateau of short grass immediately beyond the river. The north side of the plateau was bordered by a little lough about half a mile long, fringed with reeds and sedges, through which the river flowed on its way from the mountains to the Blackwater, and at the point where the river left the lough stood the castle tower. It was a fourteenth-century structure of great strength, about twenty-five feet square and nearly sixty feet high, and it rose sheer out of the water on three sides, and on the fourth was connected with the shore by a narrow causeway. The abbey buildings, the old church with its roofless walls and beautiful west window,

the cloisters and the columbarium, were less interesting to me then than they became in after years. It was the castle tower that excited my imagination and thrilled me with the romance of possession. A doorway had been made on the side opposite the causeway, but the original entrance was by a watergate opening on the lough. Through this your boat passed into a vaulted chamber with steps at one end leading to a winding stair in an angle of the tower. This led up to the roof and communicated with the three principal floors, which were divided by stone vaulting. Each floor consisted of a single room, though there were indications that formerly the two lower ones had been subdivided. The windows in the lower floors were small, little more than slits in the deep masonry of the walls: on the top story, which was beyond the reach of scaling ladders, there were fine stone mullioned windows.

The tower was so solidly built that it stood almost intact. It had never been derelict. After it had ceased to be the headquarters of my branch of the family it had been used as a shooting and fishing lodge, and even after this, when the plaster had fallen from the inside of the walls and the ivy had grown through the windows, it was not quite abandoned. From my earliest recollection the bottom floor had been occupied by Mickety Mack, an old fellow, half poacher half gillie, who having no house rent to pay and no one to support managed to live by his calling. Sometimes when my grandfather heard that he

had been catching trout with an ' otter ' or golden plover with nets, he threatened to turn him out of the tower, though it was mine not his; but nothing came of it; and indeed Mickety Mack never did any poaching on our lands. He was one of our great friends and taught me nearly everything I knew about fishing. The great chamber of the floor he occupied was so dark you could hardly see across it, and it was generally full of smoke. His bed was on the floor, a table and chair and a cupboard his only furniture; a pile of turf stood in a corner and nets hung on the plasterless walls; the door had disappeared from the opening on to the stairway, and sitting in the room you heard the lap of the water against the steps in the chamber below.

In the top room Brian and I had our lair and stronghold. Here we kept our fishing-rods, my collection of eggs, the birds we had stuffed with the help of Mickety Mack, a store of apples, and a few cooking utensils. It was our retreat from the world, a sacred place into which even Bob was only admitted on rare occasions. You will understand the fascination the place had for us when we went there on winter afternoons and lighted our turf fire, and cooked a primitive meal; or on summer nights when our grandfather was away from home and we slept there —not on beds, but on piles of hay which we had carried up—how the romance of our surroundings filled us when we stood on the roof behind the battlements and saw the stars above us and heard the ripple of the lake below; how delightful it was

to go naked down the steps in the morning for our swim before breakfast. You will not wonder that it was the dream of my boyhood to make the tower my home in the future, though it may surprise you to hear that I actually did this.

CHAPTER II

NEW OUTLOOKS

I SHOULD like to give you another look at the old place and ourselves six or seven years later, in the summer when Brian and I were together there for the last time before we went out into the world on divergent paths; but perhaps I should first say something, as briefly as possible, of the period that had passed since our childhood.

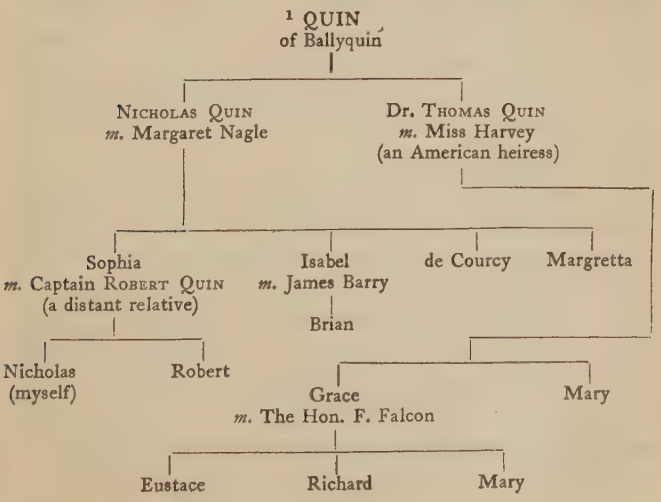
This is a little irksome, for though brevity may sometimes be the soul of wit it is much more often the soul of dullness. Where detail awakens interest compression produces dryness, and though a text-book of history may tell you the story of a thirty years' war in the same space we would ask for a love scene or a prize fight—or a chemist give you the food of a beefsteak in the compass of a meat lozenge, their economies afford us little pleasure; nor is it improbable that you would find the life of the most commonplace person you know, told in detail, with all its little secrets, more amusing and stimulating than the whole twenty thousand biographies in *Who's Who*. I cannot, therefore, in a page or two expect to awake much interest in the years I allude to.

Of happy days at Winchester, where, in addition to cricket, I learned the art of keeping my call-over place with the least expenditure of effort, there is little I need say, because none of the friends I made there come into this book, except the Falcon boys, my English cousins. Eustace, the elder of the boys, was a great cricketer, and I had the honour of being in with him when he completed his sixty and made the winning hit in the match against Eton the year he was captain of the Eleven. I shall never forget the enthusiasm, nor the ordeal he had to go through as we came back to the pavilion. His sister, my cousin Mary, who was then about thirteen years old, rushed out from the enclosure to meet him, flung her arms round his neck and burst into tears. We thought it very hard luck on him, and though she was a pretty girl and well dressed we could hardly forgive her. However, he bore it like a man, and it was admitted that it was nothing really against him.

I have spoken of the Falcons as our English cousins because they lived in England and had become English in their ways, but they were Irish by blood. Mr. Falcon, the head of a great firm of ironmasters and coalowners, which he had built up by his own ability, was a brother of Lord Lohort, an Irish peer. Mrs. Falcon was a daughter of our great-uncle, Dr. Tom Quin, the old wag who married the American heiress. I suppose the young Falcons were therefore our second cousins, but if you will take a look at the pedigree note which I have put at the bottom of

the page our family relationship will become clearer.[1]

While I was at Winchester Bob was at Osborne, and Brian went first to school in Dublin and then to France. His mother had died about two years after their return to Ireland. His grief was intense, but I think I was the only person who knew how much he suffered. The knowledge of the reality of my sympathy touched his heart and was the beginning of that loyal affection that united our lives. For several years we saw little of each other except in the holidays, and each time we met I noticed a greater difference between him and the ordinary British schoolboy. He was not a bit less companionable but different and in many ways more interesting: the little touch of French manner he acquired seemed to suit him, and when



I tried to laugh at it there was nothing to laugh about. After leaving school I went to Trinity and he to the Queen's College at Cork, where he soon became conspicuous for his ability, his eloquence in debate, and his anti-British political views. He was an ardent admirer and a favourite pupil of the blind professor of history, Michael Byrne, who had recently given up his chair and was a zealous promoter of the Gaelic League; and Brian's enthusiasm for the revival of the Irish language and our old customs led him to actions which at times seemed to me absurd, as when he appeared on the platform at a League meeting in Mallow dressed in a saffron-coloured kilt. It surprised me that our grandfather, who had heard of Brian's tendencies, should have tolerated them, but his disapproval had not shown itself beyond an occasional sarcastic remark. He liked Brian, he liked his good looks and his resemblance to himself, he was pleased at having a grandson who promised to be a classical scholar, and perhaps, being anxious to avoid a breach, delayed explanations as long as possible.

Whatever changes had occurred at Ballyquin during the last six years had been gradual. The place was not so well kept as formerly. Want of money showed itself in broken fences, neglected farm buildings, and weed-grown avenues. My grandmother had become rather feeble, and my grandfather more gouty and irascible. Aunt Margretta managed the household, looked into the farm accounts, doctored the workpeople when they were sick, and kept every one in good humour.

As I mentioned, she was only five years older than I, more like a sister than an aunt, and the staunchest friend and ally that boys could have. She was now about twenty-four, a healthy, comely, merry-hearted young woman, who had shown no inclination to get married though she had been given opportunities, and her 'bachelors' were numerous. In Uncle de Courcy there was no change, unless that perhaps his eyes were bluer, his beard shaggier, and his clothes more untidy than ever. Half-a-dozen years had made no difference that the eye could mark in that old countryside, but for me the scene I beheld was a new creation. The distant horizons of the mountains no longer bounded my world; the dreams of enchanted islands away in the western ocean had vanished—the noisy cities of the United States, not the land of Tir na n'Og, now rose from those waters—the woods behind Ballyquin had lost their old mystery; but new paths into new wonderlands had been revealed. The verse of a poem, the light on a passing cloud, a stave of music, or the smile in a girl's eyes gave me the clues to new pathways of romance, opening beyond those whose ends I had found. The unconscious joy of childhood, when we mingle with everything around us, was gone. In youth we stand apart from our surroundings: we become vividly conscious of them and of ourselves. The joy of life still remains, but we are no longer of its essence; we see it from the outside and pursue it as a lover.

And so I come to the time when, having compressed the record of years into the narrowest of

limits, as the waters of a stream may be confined for a certain distance in a culvert, I can now allow my theme to escape and overflow within such natural barriers as may direct it.

It was the summer vacation at the end of our second year at college, and Brian and I were camping in my ruins. We could have lived in much greater ease at Ballyquin House, but we enjoyed the independence of our establishment, and a few discomforts added if anything to the romance of our surroundings. In fine weather we slept in a tent at the river side; when it was wet, in our room in the tower. We did our own marketing, which included commandeering eggs and milk and butter from Ballyquin, contributed to our larder by catching trout, and cooked our own meals—at least I did, for Brian, when he made the attempt, only spoiled good victuals. Occasionally, when we had visitors, we got the assistance of Mrs. Casey, the widow of our old coachman, who lived with her son Jamesy in the cottage at the end of the plateau under the castle.

The fact that the place actually belonged to me added considerably to the satisfaction of inhabiting it. Brian said that he had no wish for possessions, and that though I owned the ruins, the beauty and the scenery around it belonged equally to him. But he was wrong. Possession is a good thing, so long as your share does not give you more than your heart can fill. It is a good thing that some home space on the earth, some enclosure of shelter in the Universe, should be

your own. It should be yours so that you may print on it a stamp which neither another man nor a government nor a county council has power to alter or obliterate; and some one you love should have it after you are gone.

I have no memories pleasanter than of those days: of the early mornings, the smell of dewy grass and wild mint and bog myrtle in the air as we ran down to the river for our swim, the plunge into the clear cold water, the coots skimming away from us through the sedges, and the return to breakfast in a glow of vigour and a feeling of kinship with the wild and free creatures of the earth; of the afternoons when we worked in the hayfields at Ballyquin, or visited neighbours, or had little tea-parties in our camp; and of the evenings after an active day when we would push the boat out into the lough and watch the sun set on the mountains, or sit by our camp fire under the tower in the starlight with the dogs lying at our feet, Larig and Teige, the cockers, and Rua, the red setter, old friends whose graves are now in the cloisters. And how pleasant were the talks we had then, when new ideas and problems of life were beginning to occupy our thoughts and nearly everything in the world was interesting, and we were confident in ourselves and in the future and conscious that we had treasures of youth to spend.

On one of these evenings, when we had been silent for some time, Brian startled me by saying, 'I don't think I shall go back to college'; and he went on to explain, 'It's not fair to the old man,

it has been on my mind a good deal. He's paying to educate me and I'm going to fight against everything he believes in.'

'He knows you're a Nationalist,' I said.

'I'm more,' he answered. 'I'm a democrat. I am opposed to his class because they reject Irish nationality and are English in all their sympathies. I want to see Ireland Irish. I'm a rebel.'

'I don't believe it,' I said. 'You would not support armed rebellion.'

'If necessary,' he replied, apparently not liking my tone, 'but it probably will not be necessary. We have a great cause, an ideal which is not mere comfort or commercial prosperity like England's. I hope it is yours too, though you do take up this damned detached attitude.'

What he chose to call my detached attitude was simply my reasonableness. Brian was always carried away by his sympathies, whereas my habit of mind was to look at a question from different sides, and extreme views always led me into opposition. Brian was intensely patriotic: I believed that I was patriotic also, and was annoyed that he should deny this claim to people of our own class. My love for Ireland is one of the few things I have never been able to doubt, but I loved her as she is and remained content, whereas he was always thinking of her wrongs and aspirations and was impatient at my tolerance.

I told Brian that I saw his point and understood his objection to remaining dependent on his grandfather. 'But what are you going to do?' I asked. 'Give up the idea of the Bar?'

'I expect I shall have to be a schoolmaster or take up journalism. I'd choose that if there was an independent paper I could work on. I shall consult Michael Byrne.'

With this object he went away next morning, and afterwards wrote to me from Dublin saying that he was going to Cork with Michael Byrne, who was to lecture there, and that he would like to entertain him and his daughter for a day or two in our camp, if, as he had no doubt, it could be managed. I was accustomed to strange visitors of Brian's invitation—a holiday party of shop-boys who were learning Irish; John Nihil, the stone mason, who had been out with the Fenians in '67; an itinerant piper, who stayed a week in the ruins, and threatened, like a homeless dog, to attach himself to us permanently—but a lady was a different matter. I knew, however, that Trenta Byrne was not more than fourteen or fifteen. I had heard of her in Dublin as having a voice which promised to make her famous, and from Brian that her mother, a beautiful peasant woman of the Austrian Tyrol, was dead, and that the girl went everywhere with her blind father. The prospect of the visit was a little alarming, but I enjoyed my importance as a host and arranged that Michael Byrne should have my room in the tower and his daughter a bed in Mrs. Casey's cottage, or a tent if she preferred it.

One morning before Brian's return I received a message from my grandfather, who was laid up with gout, to say he wished to see me. I found Aunt Margretta looking out for me when I

arrived. She said she was leaving for Mallow in half an hour to meet Mary Falcon and would like a little talk with me.

'The absurd people are sending a maid with her,' she said, 'a grand person, I expect, who will be in the way.'

I had not met Mary since she had put us to such confusion by her behaviour at Lord's and was rather curious to see her. She had apparently become much attached to Margretta, who had paid several visits to Grantry Park, the Falcons' place in England.

'What's the child like now?' I asked. 'She promised to be good-looking.'

'Child!' my aunt laughed. 'You will find her a very self-possessed young lady, but she's only fifteen, too young for you to fall in love with. I know boys of your age like girls older than themselves.'

I told her I never fell in love with any one, which was true.

'Well, put it off as long as you can,' she said. 'Now I want a little talk with you about our business affairs.'

My aunt had always confided in me. She was very fond of Brian, but she did not consult him. He was cleverer than I, but I think I had more common sense and she seemed to trust my judgement. We walked up the shrubbery paths and into the walled garden—a tangle of luxuriance—a fuchsia hedge in full bloom, borders full of carnations and snapdragons and mimulus half choked with weeds, fruit trees with the branches

untied to the walls, poppies springing up in the middle of the gravel walks.

'I remember the time when we had six men in the garden,' she said, 'and now there's only Johnny Roche, and perhaps the help of one of the farm men. Nick, we're going down hill. The rents bring in less every year, and there's a loss on our farming too. Unless something happens I don't know how it will end. Father has a scheme for marrying de Courcy to Jane Crowe, and I want to know whether you think it's possible or right.'

I had heard that old Billy Crowe was dead and had left his sister, who had lived with him, a fortune of about £5000 a year. 'She's nearer sixty than fifty,' I said.

'She is, and she's ugly, but she's a kind-hearted old thing, and I believe she'd be glad of a husband. De Courcy's very troubled about it and you might talk to him. He thinks a lot of you, Nick.'

It was a curious point on which to take the advice of a very young man.

'You don't think it would be wrong?' she asked.

'Not a bit,' I replied, 'if he's willing. She wouldn't have very long to live, then the place would be saved.'

'I think she might make him comfortable,' said my aunt, musingly, 'and keep him at home instead of drinking too much with his second-class companions, but I don't quite like the idea. The only other hope I see is in yourself.'

'What!' I exclaimed. 'Am I to look out for an heiress too? Why don't *you* marry a millionaire?'

'You can go into the Falcon business and make money and come back and take up the place yourself. Mr. Falcon suggested it once, and I believe father had a letter from him about it this morning. You wouldn't like it?'

'I'd hate it.'

'And what is it you want to do?'

My possession of four hundred pounds a year had made me rather casual about a career. The one thing that really interested me was natural history, and if I had any ambition it was to write a book on bird life. The nearest approach I had to a plan for the future was to take up the farm on which my ruin stood when the present tenant, an old childless farmer, died, and continue my favourite pursuits: the prospect of an office desk had never entered my head. I told her my objections.

'Well,' she said, 'I don't believe we can go on many more years, and the place will have to be sold. You might save it. Will you think it over?'

'I will,' said I, 'but we'll see first what can be done with Uncle de Courcy.'

I told her of my expected visitors, and a shade of annoyance came over her jolly face.

'I hope your grandfather won't hear of it. No chaperone but a blind father, and she's probably a forward little minx, spoilt by singing in public. Well, good-bye, old boy. Come over and see Mary this evening.'

I found Uncle de Courcy in his workshop fixing some new sections into the knife of a mowing machine. He burst into a loud guffaw, which was his usual way of greeting me, and then took up his clay pipe and lighted it. We had some conversation about the work that was going on, but I noticed that he was rather absent-minded and that his face had a harassed look.

'You were always a good friend to me, Nick,' he said after a while.

I nodded, and he continued, 'It's a trouble I'm in and you have a good head for advising. Did you hear that old Billy Crowe was dead? Well, Jane Crowe has his fortune, and by God, Nick, the Governor's laid his commands on me that I'll marry her.'

'Jane Crowe!' I exclaimed in feigned surprise, 'an old woman!'

'She's fifty.'

'And more, 'tis nearer sixty.'

'That's what I told the old man. "And what's she the worse for that," says he to me, "hasn't she £5000 a year, and a fine sound woman."'

'Do you think she wants to be married?' I asked.

'To be sure she does,' he replied. 'The old man says he has the way prepared for me. He told her I always admired her, but that I wouldn't speak while she was doing her faithful duty looking after her brother.'

'And what did you say to that?' I asked.

'Sure I told him I was terrified of her, and he called me a fool and said he'd made up his mind I must marry her. "You have the chance," said he, "to save the family from ruin. We're nearly broke," said he, "and when I'm gone the place will have to be sold and God knows how your sister will be kept out of the workhouse. What have you done worth a thrawneen all your life," he said, "but tar a sheep net or give a drench to a cow, and now you have the chance to marry a fine woman and save your family from destruction." '

The perspiration stood on his forehead and he looked at me wildly. 'I'm terrified, Nick,' he said.

His distress checked my inclination to laugh, but I found it hard to advise him. My uncle was a well-set-up man with a childlike sweetness of disposition, and I could understand that a lady of over fifty who wished to be married might overlook his mental limitations and rusticity. I had no doubt that my grandfather was serious, and I saw that the project was practicable and might really be a good thing for the family.

'It would be a great thing to save the old place and have you here instead of strangers,' I ventured. 'And you to be the one that did it.'

'It would indeed,' he groaned. 'That's what destroys me.'

'You don't dislike her?' I asked.

'I do not, but I've no wish for her and I'm in dread of her.'

'You must think it over, she's a kind woman.

She'd make you independent of the old man. We'll have another talk about it,' I suggested.

The look of anxiety on his face again grew acute and he laid his hand on my shoulder. 'Whisper, Nick,' he said. 'Tell me this! Do you think she'd expect me to sleep with her?'

I burst out laughing. 'Oh, I expect on cold nights she might,' I replied, and left him promising that we would have a conference about it when Brian returned.

My grandfather was in his bedroom sitting in an arm-chair, his bandaged foot resting on a stool. I had expected to find him in a bad temper, but he greeted me genially.

'Well, Nick! How are you enjoying the discomforts of your camp? I did the same sort of thing when I was young.'

When I was young—ah woful when,
Ah for the change 'twixt now and then.

That's Coleridge, as you perhaps know; but how much better Horace puts it—

Eheu fugaces, Postume, Postume,
Labuntur anni,——

The English is all monosyllables.'

I took a chair at his bidding and expressed a hope that he was better.

'Old age,' he said, 'has no compensations. The scheme of life is unfair to old age. You get all the good things at the beginning. When you don't need it and can enjoy everything, port don't hurt you, but now, when I want pegging

up and might colour my declining years with the 1870 I have below in the cellar, I daren't touch it. And the worst of it is we know there's nothing to expect from the future. A few more uncomfortable years and then the grave. Eh!'

'It's the same for every one, sir,' I remarked.

'Good!' he exclaimed. 'Nick, you're a philosopher. That's the one solitary consolation—we're all treated alike. If those people who pinch themselves on earth to lay up treasure in heaven think they're going to have a better time in the next world than sinners like me, they'll be dished, my boy, they'll be dished. We're all in the same boat wherever it's going.' He laughed. 'But I didn't intend to give you a moral lecture. If we had our lives to live over again I doubt if we should be any less foolish. We might vary our misdoings; we might choose different wives or investments or sins, but I expect it would come to much the same thing.'

He lighted a cigar and offered me one, which I declined.

'Now let's get to business,' he said. 'You have another year, isn't it, to run at Trinity? What do you mean to do then?'

I told him I thought of getting some training in an Estate office and afterwards taking up the Castle farm.

'A squireen is it?' he asked sarcastically.

Fear of ridicule prevented my mentioning my ambitions as a natural historian and I was silent.

'No,' he went on. 'You'll have to earn your living, my boy. You are not so well

provided for as you thought, and I'm sorry to have to tell you so. I have a letter from Massey, the lawyer, my co-trustee in your affairs, saying that the tenants on your father's property have got a big reduction in the Land Court and that about £300 a year each, not £400, is all you and Bob are likely to get. How do you like that?'

'Not at all, sir,' I replied, quickly realising the import of this news. 'I'd like to see Mr. Massey and go into the facts.'

'Oh, you can see him, of course, but I'm afraid the facts are what he says. There's a big drop in my own rents too, and I'm in for a bad time. When I'm gone the place may have to be sold unless one of you has money enough to take it over. There's a chance of de Courcy marrying Jane Crowe, she has a wish for him, but he's afraid he'd be laughed at and wants coaxing. You might tell him you'd like her for an aunt.'

He detected a grin on my face and frowned it down. He then took up a letter from Mr. Falcon and read me a passage from it, in which he renewed the offer he had already made to take one or even two of us into his business. He suggested that if Brian and I liked to come over to Grantry during the vacation they would be very pleased to see us, and we could talk it over.

'Now!' said my grandfather, 'that's a chance one boy in a thousand doesn't get. I know Brian won't look at it, and if he did, Falcon

wouldn't keep him six months—he'd be siding with the workmen against him and leading a strike—but you'll be all right. D'ye agree to it?'

I told him I should prefer anything to a business life.

'Well!' he asked testily, 'what's your alternative?'

'I'd rather go abroad,' I said. 'I have a friend at Trinity whose people are squatters in New South Wales, and when he goes back he's starting a ranch on his own. He once suggested my joining him.'

'That's all in the air,' he said. 'A bird in the hand, a falcon, is worth two in the Australian bush.' He seemed pleased by his pun and added in a mollified tone, 'Well, think it over. Anyway I'll write and tell Falcon you'll go over and pay them a visit. 'Twon't hurt you to see a little society, we're all clodhoppers here now. By the way his girl's expected to-day.' He seemed to forget my presence for a minute in some train of thought and then asked me if I remembered his brother, our Uncle Tom. 'All his money went to his two girls,' he said. 'He got it with his wife, an American woman that he cured of a squint. Grace married Falcon, and Mary's an old maid. She's godmother to young Mary, and the girl's to have her fortune. She's an heiress. She ought to be kept in the family.'

It was evidently a hint that if I went into the business I should have a chance of cultivating the heiress, a suggestion that aroused my supreme

contempt, but as my grandfather did not put it definitely I said nothing.

'Well,' he concluded, 'I am sorry to have had to give you the bad news about your affairs; it's clear you can't live on your income, and I believe you have sense enough not to miss this chance Falcon's offering you. Now go and think it over.'

I went back to my camp in low spirits: I think my feelings must have been something like those of Uncle de Courcy on having to make the choice between freedom and prosperity. I had never contemplated the possibility of a business career, of daily routine and imprisonment in an office—the life that three out of four young men have to lead. If there had been no one to consider but myself I am sure I should not have given it a serious thought, but what I had heard of the risk of the place having to be sold and Aunt Margretta being left in poor circumstances made the chance of working to retrieve the family fortunes look like a duty. Uncle de Courcy was my hope. I made up my mind that if his marriage with Miss Crowe came off I would go my own way, but if it fell through I should have to yield; and I further decided that as a good sportsman I would use no influence to induce my uncle to do his part. I would give him no advice one way or the other, but leave it to Fate.

During the week before Brian's return I saw a good deal of Mary Falcon, who sometimes came over to my camp with Aunt Margretta and some-

times alone. Bob, home for holidays and happily occupied as our scullion, was about Mary's age, but she looked over his head and aspired to comradeship with myself, which I readily conceded, for she was sensible and quick-witted and very pleasing in appearance. I have found that I generally get on well with girls of all ages, but I am one whom they are more ready to treat as a friend than to fall in love with. Mary was as frank and natural with me as if I had been her brother, but I noticed afterwards when Brian came that she was a little shy with him, he being just the handsome chivalrous sort of young man whom romantic girls of fifteen make a hero of. And Mary was very romantic! I saw that at once from her excitement about my ruins and her wish to know the story of the tower and the people who had lived in it; but everything in our surroundings seemed to touch her imagination—the mountains, the river, the old house at Ballyquin, the cottages, the friendly demonstrative people. She had, no doubt, been made much of in her own circle; but those blessings and good wishes, those magnificent point-blank praises which our people bestow when they feel admiration, were quite new to her; she enjoyed being told that she belonged to the real old stock—'Couldn't you tell it by the proud lift of her head and the kind word in her mouth?' or to hear herself spoken of as 'the dear darling young lady'—and accepted all the kind flattery with a mixture of amusement and the composure of a princess receiving homage.

When I afterwards saw the place she lived in, the grand orderly mansion, with its discreetly distant servants, hardly human beings, the precise park with the arm of the distant town creeping up to its gates, I could understand the leap of her spirit into the expansiveness of our wild country and undisciplined people. She was curious to hear about Brian, whose father she had been told was a rebel.

'What did he rebel about?' she asked.

'He did not like being ruled by England,' I answered.

'Does Brian?'

'No, he does not like it either.'

'Do you?'

'I'm afraid it doesn't trouble me,' I replied. 'We help to rule them.'

A day or two afterwards when she was introduced to Brian he assumed she was English. 'You're welcome to Ireland,' he said. 'You're the first of our English cousins to pay us a visit.'

'I'm Irish,' she corrected him.

'What, after being born and brought up in England!' he exclaimed, 'that makes you doubly welcome.' He looked at her with a pleased smile and added, 'Are you quite sure you're Irish? Now if England and Ireland were fighting, which would you back?'

'How could they? Doesn't Ireland belong to England?' she asked.

That was just the remark which would have made him angry if it had been made by a man, but his manner to ladies was always charming.

'I am sure you don't want to belong to England,' he said. 'We won't let you. We're going to make you really Irish.'

'But we won't let him make you a rebel,' said Aunt Margretta, laughing. 'We're not rebels, and we love Ireland just as much as he does.'

He was too full of his plans to enter into a discussion. 'I'm going to South Africa and round the world,' he cried, taking my aunt's arm and walking on with her towards the house.

'South Africa! What can you mean?' exclaimed my aunt.

'South Africa!' Mary said to me as we followed. 'What is he going to do there? Shoot lions?' And I thought she would be so disappointed if I told her he was going to collect money, that I said I hardly knew, but that it was something to do with a league of Irishmen.

On our walk over Brian had told me jubilantly that his plans for the present were settled. Michael Byrne was about to start on a voyage to South Africa and Australia for the purpose of organising foreign branches of the Gaelic League and collecting funds. His blindness made a companion and secretary necessary, and Brian had been offered and had accepted the post. Beyond payment of his expenses there would be no remuneration, but I agreed with him that the opportunity of seeing something of the world and at the same time assisting in work he had at heart was one not to be missed. I had then told him of my interview with my grandfather—the suggestion for restoring the family fortunes

through Uncle de Courcy, and Mr. Falcon's offer to myself. Without having any alternative suggestion he had received both proposals with contempt, 'and if Uncle de Courcy speaks to me about it,' he said, 'I shall do all I can to put him off it.'

'And what if the place has to be sold?' I objected.

'Better sell the place than sell your souls to keep it,' he replied.

'That sounds mighty fine,' I said, nettled by the unhelpfulness of his heroic view, 'but it's our duty to stand by our place and our people, and if de Courcy doesn't come to the scratch I shall have to take this chance.' The appearance of Aunt Margretta and Mary had prevented further discussion.

From my previous conception of reformers and propagandists I had expected to meet in Michael Byrne an aggressive person, who would make you feel uncomfortable because you were contented, but he was nothing of the sort: from the impression I retain of him I am sure there was an essential nobility in him, and I can understand the reason for his influence over Brian. I was amazed at the vision his other senses gave him: he knew most of the birds by their notes, and he could tell by his ear that the trees on the slope of the hill were firs, and where the reeds fringed the edge of the lough. 'The wind tells me all its news,' he said. He made me lead him round the ruins and describe every part of them so that he might be able to picture his surroundings, and his inward vision

gave the blind man pictures of the past which I had never seen. The columbarium especially attracted him, with its vaulted conical roof and the circular rows of internal pigeon holes, three hundred and sixty-five in number, tier above tier. I saw the masonry and the ferns and flowers in the crannies, but he was back in the fourteenth century, and was looking at white clouds of circling birds and hearing the flutter of their wings. I then took him to the top of my tower, where he asked to be left to ' smoke a pipe in the sky ' and contemplate the view of the ring of mountains I had told him about.

His daughter Trenta was amazingly handsome with the dark warm colouring of the south, no doubt inherited from her mother. She was about the same age as Mary, but looked older. About Mary there was still much of the child, about Trenta already much of the woman. She was vivid in movement and theatrical in manner, and having led most of her life since her mother's death with her relations in Austria she spoke English imperfectly and with a foreign accent. To picture her is to see bright colours: a crimson kerchief round her head, or a dress of intermingled oriental hues, or flowers wreathed in her hair. She was like a presentation in a play, and to watch her walking across the grass plateau in front of the ruins gave the old walls the appearance of stage carpentry. Her expectancy of admiration determined me to show her none, but to myself she was really indifferent: it was Brian she wished to captivate, and this became apparent when Mary

came on the scene, in her obvious jealousy and the little wiles she used to attract his notice when he paid any attention to her unconscious rival.

In their demeanour to each other Trenta was demonstrative and patronising, Mary was friendly and attracted by Trenta's vivacity. On the afternoon when Aunt Margretta brought Mary over to the camp the two girls went off together—Trenta the leader, Mary the led, but led only as far as she chose to go. They climbed the tower and stood together on a rather dangerous part of the parapet; they pushed off together in our boat, which was moored on the river bank; but when it came to bathing, Trenta was alone. I see a picture of them now—Trenta clothed in what seemed to be yellow silk pyjamas in the water, and Mary standing on the bank in a fresh white frock looking on with dignity. I am sure Mary would like to have bathed too, but her sense of modesty or convention made her shrink from appearing in sight of us all clothed in some improvised garment. Trenta came out glowing and kissed her hand as she ran past us to the tent with the yellow silk clinging to her figure and a bunch of marigolds which she had pulled on the river bank shining in her hair.

The table was spread for our evening meal out of doors on the plateau of grass between the cottage and the tower. Uncle de Courcy, whom I had invited to join our party, did not present himself, and Aunt Margretta explained his absence by telling me that he and my grandfather had driven off together in the direction of Ballyclogh,

de Courcy in his best clothes and my grandfather holding a bouquet of roses. 'I believe,' said she, 'he's gone to propose.'

We were a happy family in spite of a little antagonism which I could see my aunt felt towards Trenta, who indeed had taken possession of our camp and assumed the part of hostess by presiding over the teapot. Nor do I think my aunt was mollified by the presumptuous flattery of the girl when she said, 'Is it possible Madame is the aunt of these two big men? I would have thought she might be their sister, but Mr. Nicholas has told me it is not so.'

We sat for a long time that evening talking together. The sun was setting on the Kerry mountains, and the level rays struck the grey walls of the ruins and threw long shadows on the grass, the tower, the masonry of which was covered with yellow lichen, showing against the sky like gold. I remember Michael Byrne asking us to tell him what each of us saw, and that we all showed him a different scene. Brian's was the most picturesque: there was something of the poet about him though he never wrote verses. He described the mountains, their outline in the west lost in hazy splendour, in the east defined in purple masses against coral clouds, and our little river, half in shade half in light, flashing from the broken water of the shallows into deep green pools that held the reflection of clouds rose-tinted in the sunset. Aunt Margretta saw that Dorgan, the farmer, and his sons were still at work in their meadow finishing the last of their

hay wynds, and that some asses had broken into the young corn in one of our fields. She called Jamesy Casey and sent him off to find a boy to drive them out. 'Every man in the country has an ass and a goat,' she exclaimed impatiently, 'and we haven't a fence on the place fit to keep them out.' When my turn came I remember seeing and telling of a wild duck and her young pushing into the rushes at the edge of the lough, and a heron high up in the sky flying homeward from his feeding ground; and the intrusion of knowledge probably spoilt my picture when I informed my audience that though he seemed to be flying so slowly he was doing fifty miles an hour, and that though he measured five feet from tip to tip of his wings he only weighed three pounds. Mary had not courage to attempt a description—'Something like fairyland,' was all she said—but Trenta was eager to speak and became theatrical.

'It is not fairyland I see there,' she cried. 'Ah, no! My father has told me what is hidden among those mountains. I see a country of desolation and a few small farms. It is winter. The rain falls. The police are assembled round the house. An old man and his family have been evicted by a cruel landlord, and they are departing along the road never to return to their home. I see before me here, blotting the so beautiful scene, ruined cottages on the roadside, and I know that the poor people who once lived in them are exiles in America. And the tyrants who have done the wrong——'

'Don't talk nonsense, child,' Aunt Margretta interrupted her; 'the people were not driven from their wretched old cabins—they went into the nice new cottages built by the Board of Works, which they get for a rent of eighteen pence a week, and find room in them to take in lodgers.'

'Some few cottages! Yes, perhaps,' said Trenta, unabashed by the anticlimax; 'but is not the world full of our exiles? My father has written of them. But I ask pardon! I had forgotten that Madame is of the class that has done these things.'

It was a precocious and irritating repartee, but Aunt Margretta was not one of those whose wits are subtle enough to reply effectively. Brian intervened: 'Of course our class did fail in its duty to the people and the country,' he said hastily, 'we cannot get away from it.'

'Not at all!' said my aunt. 'I don't believe it! Every one fails more or less in his duty. The landlords had a difficult position. I don't believe they were a bit worse than any other people.'

'Trenta is young and warm-hearted and generous in her sympathy with the poor and unfortunate,' said Michael Byrne. 'Please God the old sorrowful days of Ireland are past. We must think, not of them, not of old wrongs and hatreds, but of our good hope for the future. You have given me a real picture; each of you has made it clearer, and the river running through the rocks, and the crows calling before they settle

for the night in the trees of Ballyquin—these also have been enlightening me.'

Trenta went round to her father and kissed him. 'Now, dearest,' she said, 'I will show you another tableau, one that is more beautiful than this.'

A minute later she appeared on the top of the tower, and holding her head back flung her voice into a mountain cattle call of the Tyrol. I had never heard so wonderful a voice; it seemed to gather the beauty of the evening light and colour into the full sweet tones, and when she repeated the call more softly it was like an echo coming back to us from the mountains. She held me enchanted. To her father, whose eyes filled with tears, no doubt she had shown the Alpine pastures and a vision of the peasant girl he had found there and made his wife.

After the others had left us, Brian and I sat for a long time with Michael Byrne while the night fell and the land grew dark and mysterious around us. He was in happy mood for giving expression to his thoughts, and we were willing listeners. I did not kindle to the fire of his enthusiasm like Brian—my mind is not of the order that is attracted by ideals—but that evening as I listened I was at least able to understand their significance, and realise that the things which to me were little more than matters of opinion were to him faiths.

'We are fellow workers with God,' he said. 'We are helping to build not only our country but creation. Everything we do has eternal

significance. Life itself is our care. We must be on God's side or against him. "Choose well, your choice is brief and yet endless."' He repeated the verses in which these words came. I recall the earnest voice, as we listened with the stars overhead and the sound of the water lapping against the stones under the tower in our ears—

Heard are the voices,
Heard are the sages,
The worlds and the ages:
Choose well, your choice is
Brief and yet endless.

Here eyes do regard you,
In Eternity's stillness;
Here is all fullness,
Ye brave to reward you;
Work and despair not.

As we broke up our watch and I was going to my tent, I was brought back from the stars to the plain facts of life by the appearance of Uncle de Courcy. He had been hidden behind the tower and came out when he saw me alone.

'Nick,' he said in a hoarse whisper, 'I'm terrified to go home.'

'Why so?' I asked in amazement at his sudden appearance.

'Father's after driving me to Ballyclogh to propose for Jane Crowe,' he said. 'He wouldn't trust me to go alone. He drove me to the lodge and left me to go in, and said he'd call back for me.'

'Did she accept you?' I asked anxiously.

'I didn't go in at all,' he replied dejectedly;

'I hid in the bushes till father was gone, and then I came back across the fields. Will you give me a corner to sleep in somewhere, Nick, I'm terrified to go home?'

Thus I saw my fate decided.

CHAPTER III

THE HIGHWAYSIDE

The date proposed by Mr. Falcon for my visit to Grantry Park fell just before that fixed for Brian's departure for South Africa, and I promised to see him off if he called for me at the Falcons' on his way to Southampton. He had already given Mary, with whom he had established a great friendship before she left us, a half promise to pay her relatives a visit, and he had another inducement to fall in with my plan in his wish to see the South African friends he had spoken of who were now living at Mine Ferry. We were at the age when it is attractive to do things in any way rather than the obvious one; and at a suggestion of mine we decided, instead of going direct to Grantry, to travel by a steamer that called at Plymouth on the voyage from Cork to London, and to walk from there to Grantry. I knew very little of England, he nothing, and the prospect of a tramp through one of its pleasantest parts was attractive, and a much more interesting beginning to the journey into the world, which we both felt we

were embarked on, than we should have found by buying railway tickets. So having a week at our disposal we sent our luggage on by train and followed at leisure, carrying knapsacks with a few necessaries for our wayfaring.

We skirted Dartmoor, and after two or three days came into a land of beautiful old villages among orchards, where Devon borders on Somerset. The country had none of the wildness and mystery of our Irish mountains and moorlands, but its very homeliness was touched with enchantment. It was the first week in September, the air was fresh, the skies were cloudless, the distant horizon was lost in the haze, the half-cut cornfields lay warm and golden in a woodland the green of which had become sombre—the elm trees almost black. In the orchards the ripening apples glowed in the sunlight, and every cottage garden was a treasury of colour and a fountain of scent. One of the charms of that country was that we never saw very far ahead of us. There were always little hills bounding the slopes or levels with the promise of something hidden beyond. We would come suddenly upon a village in a hollow, its cottages half concealed in trees, a church, an inn, a post office, a shop, a forge, one or two larger houses on the roadside where a country doctor or a couple of maiden ladies might be expected to live,—a little place without a single new building, complete in itself, and looking as if it had been complete for hundreds of years. It was all as different as it could be from the wildness of our poor Irish villages, squalid

amongst glorious surroundings of mountain and river.

Here was not a field undrained, hardly a wild creature left on the land, for even the pheasants were reared under hens and had to be persuaded to fly; here in every direction you saw the marks of immemorial occupation, but the beauty was unspoilt,—the very buildings were so mellowed by time that they seemed a part of the natural features of the scene. And those village churches and old inns! What a contrast to ours. Our beautiful churches are all in ruins, and the structures that have taken their place, whether Catholic or Protestant, are only equalled in ugliness by the tabernacles of English and Welsh Nonconformists. And our burial-grounds! Those wildernesses of broken tombstones overgrown with weeds and nettles are a dishonour to the dead and a disgrace to the living; but here, in the old churches—and the graveyards surrounding them — beauty and remembrance are preserved. In those sheltered precincts an angel of memory abides; but there is also something in their simple beauty that, like an angel of forgetfulness, hides the cruel vision of the grave.

And the inns! We have none. Every village in Ireland has a dozen shops where you may buy porter, but hardly one where you can get a clean bed or a decent meal; but here at every stage of our journey we found a pleasant resting-place and good simple fare, and, if we were inclined for society, a comfortable seat in the inn parlour or on the bench outside among the village people

who were smoking and drinking their pots of ale or cider.

'I don't want to see Ireland made like England,' I remarked to Brian, 'but I wish our villages and cottages were more like these.'

'So do I,' he replied; 'but wait till you see the part of the country that makes them rich. Whole counties spoilt by mines and manufacturing towns. We have this consolation for being poor that our country is not mutilated.'

We walked about twenty or twenty-five miles a day, staying for the night at any place that attracted us or suited the hour of our arrival. The fact of our having no fixed destinations added to the interest of our journey. Over every hill-top lay the unknown; any turn in the road might bring an adventure. The glamour of youth endowed everything and every one with romance, and gave a significance even to the greetings we exchanged with people on the road, fellow-travellers whom we should never see again. Brian, whose memory was stored with poetry, quoted a verse which expressed the feeling:

Thou goest thine, I go mine,
Many ways we wend;
Many ways and many days
Ending in one end.
Many a wrong and its curing song,
Many a road and many an inn,
Room to roam, but only one home
For all the world to win.

'One home? Does he mean the grave?' I asked.

'No, I think he means a destination beyond.'

'The same for all? Attila and St. Francis, for instance?'

'I think,' said Brian, 'the poet had a faith in our brotherhood, in some bond between fellow-travellers that would bring us all together in the end.'

'He expresses a hope. Of course he knows nothing about it, but he gives a sort of feeling of truth,' I said. 'The nearest we can get to truth about our destiny is to feel we are on the road to truth,' would have been my comment now.

'We must guard against make-belief and sentiment,' I added. 'When that verse of poetry came to your mind I think we had just passed a rather nice-looking girl:

> Thou goest thine, I go mine,
> Many ways we wend.

I saw the charm of the greeting; but would it have been the same if it had been, say, a young butcher that we passed?'

He laughed. 'Superficial impressions are more misleading than make-beliefs,' he answered. 'The butcher's butchery is the least thing about him: he has a pedigree as old as man, and a destiny as mysterious as our own. I don't meet butchers on this journey.'

'You must have simplicity to get the real feeling of poetry,' I remarked. 'If we met a maid-servant in her Sunday clothes as grand as anything on the road here you wouldn't speak to her. If Wordsworth had met her she wouldn't have asked

him if he were " Stepping westward ". If we said, " How-do-you-do! " she would either be offended or reply, " Nicely, thank you. How's yourself? " but if we met one of our country girls in Ireland you would not pass her without saying, " Good morrow ", and she would reply, " Good morrow kindly ", and if it were an old man and you said to him, " A fine day ", he would answer, " A fine day, glory be to God ". I'm afraid the young men would not, and we are beginning to see high-heeled boots and picture hats among our peasant girls.'

' Oh, we will stamp out all that beastly imitation and revive our own national dress before long,' Brian said with conviction. I mentioned that he was the possessor of a saffron kilt, and knowing that he had the courage of his ideas I was thankful that he had not brought it to England.

Everywhere in that part of the country there were large estates. We saw glimpses of the Tudor gables or Georgian porticoes of mansions surrounded by parks carefully guarded by high walls and closed lodge gates. To us, accustomed in Ireland to ride or walk where we pleased, the difficulty of taking our own line across country was annoying, the warnings to trespassers provocative. In one place we followed our inclination and invaded an attractive-looking park; but when we met at close quarters a party evidently belonging to the house, though they hardly looked at us, we felt like intruders, and shortly afterwards we were shown the nearest way to the road by a game-

keeper, who said he wasn't going to have his coverts disturbed by 'towerists'.

'Of course we have no business here,' I laughed in reply to Brian's indignant comment.

'And what business have they here,' he exclaimed, 'monopolising the whole country and leaving the people nothing but the roads?'

He saw a vision of the time when the State would acquire these places and divide them into economic holdings, which gave me no satisfaction. I was a Conservative, he a Democrat; and though I have modified my views since the old properties passed from those people whose ancestors built them up into the hands of successors who regard them as pleasure-grounds, my sympathies were with the people on the inside of those park walls,—Brian's with those on the road.

That afternoon we had a little adventure which belonged to the time of youth. Two girls passed us on bicycles, nice-looking girls,—farmers' daughters, we thought,—and as they passed we smiled and they smiled, and after they had passed they turned and waved adieu. Here was the privilege of being young. If at my present age of thirty-five I felt disposed to smile at pleasant-looking strange maidens who passed me on the road I should hesitate to do so lest the familiarity should be misinterpreted, and I doubt if they would want to wave adieux to me. But this passing signal was not final. Striding along at a good pace we caught them up a quarter of an hour afterwards laboriously pushing their bicycles up a steep hill, whereupon we took off our hats and

Brian immediately offered to push one of the bicycles while I secured the other.

'Beautiful weather,' said Brian's young lady.

'Yes, tip-top,' he replied. 'Now I think we ought to regulate these proceedings. Would you do me the honour of introducing me to your friend? My name's Barry.'

'Miss Williamson,' she said, 'Mr. Barry.'

'And me,' I followed up to my lady, 'would you present me? My name's Quin.'

'Oh, what a funny name,' she laughed. 'Mr. Quin, Miss Hartley.'

'Now we're beginning to know each other,' said Brian, 'but not half as well as I hope we shall. My Christian name is Brian.'

'Mine's Nick,' I added promptly.

'Oh, indeed,' said Miss Hartley; and Miss Williamson laughed again. She seemed the merrier of the two and I was glad I had her bicycle.

'Now I call this a real bit of good luck,' said Brian. 'Here are we two solitary travellers in a strange land,—we're Irish, I may tell you,—and there is nothing an Irishman likes so much as to be of service to a charming lady, and the only thing that is troubling me is that the hill is not leagues long so that we might go on serving you. But the beastly top of it is in sight.'

'And then,' I added, 'you'll ride away and forget us.'

'We're not in all that hurry,' said my Miss Williamson pleasantly.

So when the hill-top was reached we did not

part, and we became so friendly after a mile that the young ladies accepted an invitation to have tea with us at a comfortable-looking roadside inn that we were passing. We had already learned something about them. They were great friends and came from Birmingham. Miss Hartley, who was mistress in a board school, had not been very well, and Miss Williamson, who was in what she called a 'drapery establishment', were taking their holiday together. They were staying at a farmhouse in a village about five miles farther on. Last year they went to Llandudno, but thought they would try the country for a change. In the same time with girls of our own class we should have got no further than some obvious remarks about the scenery.

They were very different, almost a contrast in appearance. Miss Hartley was pale with delicate features and beautiful eyes with dark lashes; Miss Williamson was a delightfully healthy and happy-looking girl with a good figure and a good deal of fair hair and a pretty mouth,—not so good-looking as her friend but more attractive I thought. We had a good deal of fun as we sat round the tea-table, Miss Hartley presiding.

'How many lumps of sugar?' she asked Brian.

'Fancy your not remembering after all these years,' laughed her friend.

'Well, it does seem more than half an hour,' I remarked.

'I expect,' said Miss Hartley, 'you think it rather funny of us to make friends with you like

this, and if we'd been girls in your own class you wouldn't have spoken to us.'

She confused me for a moment by her frank speaking and suggestion that we did not regard them as gentlewomen. I was glad that Brian did not make any attempt to gloze it over. 'It was jolly kind and friendly of you to let us,' he said.

'Well,' said Miss Williamson, 'we're on a holiday and I don't care the least whether this party is a strictly proper one or not.'

'In Ireland people are less conventional than in England,' I observed, 'and poorer. We're poor.'

'Oh, I'm Irish too,' said Miss Williamson. 'At least my parents are. I was born in Birmingham.'

I had noticed that her accent though not Irish was different from that of her friend, who spoke with a marked provincial English tone. 'What part of Ireland do you come from?' I asked with interest.

'Father from the north, mother from the south,' she replied. 'One of my grandfathers was a farmer in Antrim and the other a clergyman in Kerry.'

'What luck,' I cried, 'to come across an Irish girl here. I was beginning to feel homesick till I met you, and now I'm in Ireland again.'

Meanwhile Brian seemed deeply interested in Miss Hartley's school work, and from fragments of conversation which I heard,—for I was occupied at the time with my own companion,—he was inquiring about her reading and recommending

books to her. Miss Williamson and I found lighter topics, but our friendship progressed. Once by accident our hands touched under the table-cloth and I took the opportunity of holding hers in mine for a moment. She withdrew it at first, but allowed it to return shortly afterwards.

When tea was over and we had to face the prospect of parting I am sure we none of us liked it. A good idea, however, occurred to me. 'What is the name of the place you are staying at?' I asked.

Dunster, they said, was the nearest village, about a mile from their farmhouse.

'Then,' said I, 'we're not going to say good-bye. Will we, Brian? Another five miles is quite enough for to-day, and we'll stay at Dunster to-night—that is if you'll promise to let us see a little more of you. If not, we shall go somewhere else. Any old place does for us.'

'We have no engagements,' said Miss Hartley demurely.

'Oh yes, do come,' said my friend. 'We find the evenings pretty dull, though the farmer's family are very kind and there are two grown-up sons.'

'I hate them both.'

'You really think it worth while to change your plans?'

'We have no plans, and we'd change them if we had.'

And so on until it was settled and we had arranged to meet at the church gate after supper at eight o'clock.

We were lucky in getting accommodation at the inn at Dunster, which was full of people who had come there for the stag-hunting, but we were unlucky in the weather, for a downpour of rain began just at the time when we were preparing to keep our tryst. We put on our waterproofs and were at the church gates at the appointed time, but we did not expect to see our friends, and after waiting for half an hour we returned to the inn.

'This seems a very beautiful village, even in the rain,' I said to Brian before we went to bed. 'I should like to see it on a fine day. What about staying here to-morrow night? There is no particular hurry.'

'This is pure philandering, Nick,' he laughed.

'And a very pleasant occupation on a holiday,' I replied. 'We'll go round and call on the girls to-morrow.'

The next morning was gloriously fine with a fresh breeze and a warm sun, and soon after breakfast we set off to Mr. Partridge's farm. I hardly knew what Brian felt like, but it was quite certain I had fallen in love, for I was both elated and perturbed and conscious of possessing a secret joy which I could share with no one. We found our friends in the orchard at the back of the farmhouse. At first we did not see them for they were hidden among the leaves of the trees. They were picking apples, each at work in her own tree, Miss Hartley on a step-ladder, Miss Williamson sitting on a bough to which she had climbed. Baskets fixed between the branches held the apples they had gathered.

'How you startled me! you made me drop one,' said Miss Williamson, as I came up to her tree. 'When they are dropped they get bruised. Mr. Partridge warned us. You have to be most particular about these pippins. So here you are! I said you'd come. Helen said we'd never set eyes on you again.'

'Would you have minded?' I asked.

'Oh, I'm glad you've come,' she said, continuing to pick apples and place them carefully in the basket.

In the morning sunshine she looked fresher and prettier than ever. Looking at her I wondered why I had thought her not quite perfect when I had first seen her—perhaps because I had not then seen her forehead and hair. She was now without a hat, and I saw with admiration her shapely head and the comely disarray of fair hair above beautiful brows.

Brian and I had planned a picnic, and the girls seemed almost as disappointed as we were that they were prevented from coming, their hostess having invited some neighbours to tea that afternoon especially to meet them.

'But the evening?' I asked.

'We have nothing to do after tea,' said Miss Hartley.

'Well,' said Brian, 'if you promise to come for a walk with us we'll remain at Dunster to-night. If not we shall go.'

'Of course they'll come,' said I.

'Of course we will,' said my Miss Williamson.

They walked back part of the way to Dunster

with us, the same arrangement of couples being maintained. I don't know how Brian got on with his damsel, but comradeship with mine progressed rapidly. I found out that her father was a manager in an electrical works and that when a young man engaged at the cable station at Waterville in Kerry he had met her mother, who was the daughter of the Protestant clergyman of that district; that she had a delicate little sister; that they were not very well off and, of course, she had to work. She heard from me that I was at Trinity, that we had a family property which we could not afford to keep up, and that I might have to go into business though I wished to live a country life and be a naturalist, which she seemed to think, until I explained, was a man who stuffed birds and animals. Before we parted we had almost reached the stage of using Christian names.

'Your name is Annette,' I said.

'And yours,' she said, 'is Nick. You have very funny names.'

'I am going to call you Annette. Will you call me Nick?'

'I don't think I know you quite well enough yet,' she laughed; 'perhaps this evening I might.'

To fill in the time before evening Brian and I hired a couple of horses and scoured the roads in the hope of picking up the staghounds which were hunting that day in the neighbourhood. I was glad our young ladies were not there to see us, for Love, which had not yet interfered with my appetite, had made me thoughtful about my appearance, and clothed in flannels and riding

screws we looked anything but heroic. I should like to have shown myself to Annette well turned out and mounted on my hunter at a meet of the Duhallows. On our return to the inn a cold bath and a change of flannels from my knapsack did something to restore my self-confidence, and after a hearty meal we went off to keep our tryst in high spirits. We had avoided speaking to each other about the girls in the afternoon. My own feelings were in a state that did not allow of definition, and Brian was equally disinclined to be confidential. 'Well, we're going away to-morrow morning anyway, and we shall probably never see them again,' he said just before we met them, as if in reply to some question which had arisen in his mind or I had asked.

We were a little before our time, but they did not keep us waiting long. We saw them coming up the lane and hurried to meet them. They looked even nicer than when we had seen them in the morning, and I expect they had taken a little thought about their appearance. They wore straw hats and light summer cotton frocks,—Miss Hartley's white, Annette's pale pink—how well I remember it! and how fresh she looked, how utterly captivating! But I will say no more. I do not want you to begin to laugh at me.

We spent a few minutes deciding which way to go, and chose a path through fields which led upward along a stream in the valley before us. We fell into pairs at once and Miss Hartley was my companion when we started, but we all knew that this was only a temporary arrangement.

'I hope the tea-party went off well,' I said.

'Oh, they're very kind worthy people,' she replied, in a tone that suggested she was accustomed to move in high circles of society. 'Fancy, they wanted to play "kiss in the ring" after tea. Nan actually agreed, she's so good-natured, but I threw cold water upon it.'

'Perfectly right,' I agreed.

'These young farmers are such yokels,' she said. 'I've been having a most interesting talk with Mr. Barry about books. He's very clever, isn't he?'

'Yes,' I replied, 'in some ways, very. And he's a good speaker. He can make a crowd of people listen to him though he's so young at it.'

'Did you ever hear him speak?'

'Not in public, but he makes speeches to me when he's interested.'

'He did to me,' she said, 'about the glories of Ireland when England was still uncivilised, and he got *that* eloquent.'

I was not interested in our conversation. Brian and Annette were just in front of us, and I was wondering what they were talking about and admiring her figure and the way she held her head. It seemed a shame that a girl like that should spend her days in a Birmingham drapery establishment among shopwalkers and the smell of calico. Miss Hartley was telling me that she found teaching very dull though she loved some of the children.

'Sometimes,' she said, 'I want to rush away from it. I long for wild adventure. I could do

almost anything.' Her eyes flashed and she looked very handsome. I took her to be a romantic, impulsive creature, as different as could be in every way from Annette, who seemed so calm and happy and sensible. 'Well, there's one thing,' she continued, 'when we go away for a holiday we can do what we like. We're not like the young ladies you know with relatives always guarding them.' Her defiant tone made me laugh.

'I wish we knew more of them like you,' I said, 'though two of you are all we want,' and my nonsense compelled her to laugh too.

Our path went over a hill from which we had a view of the sea, and then led down towards the shore through a broad wooded valley. The sun had set, but the sea in the west still made golden tracts between dark hollows of the coast, and above the moor behind us the moon, now nearly full, was half-way up the eastern sky.

The arrangement of couples, which we had all been waiting for, came at a stile where the others waited for us. Brian got over and gave his hand to Miss Hartley, who climbed and alighted very neatly. We let them get on a little way before following, and then Annette climbed the stile and jumped without waiting for help. In doing so she gave me a liberal but momentary vision of a well-shaped leg—a flash, nothing more, a disturbing flash, of itself nothing: in its relation to this one girl in the world, magical. Its immediate effect was to make me take the stile in a flying leap. 'And now, old girl,' I said as I stood at

her side, 'I have you to myself at last. Are you glad?'

'I'm a little afraid of Mr. Barry,' she said; 'I feel more at home with you.'

Her hat had fallen off in her jump, and she did not replace it, but walked on carrying it in her hand. Again I was bewitched by the beauty of her thick, fair hair that grew low above her brows and flowed back in waves behind her ears, and I got a new and delightful impression of her face as I was shown it in profile with the slight uplift of nose and upper lip. I caught her disengaged hand.

'They may look back!' she exclaimed, but without withdrawing it.

'What if they do!' I answered; 'but we'll walk slowly and let them get out of sight. How jolly it is to be together. I can hardly believe that yesterday morning I had never seen you.'

'Wonderful,' she laughed. 'And think of all those other girls you hadn't seen yesterday morning and never will see.'

I suggested something about ours being no chance meeting; about certain meetings on our way through life being predestined; and her reply was a quick, inquiring glance at me as though she was wondering whether I was speaking in jest or earnest. Twenty-four hours ago I should not have believed myself capable of expressing such views, but Love had shaken the foundations of my common sense.

The darkening valley with a glow of light beyond it on the sea was very beautiful. Annette

must have felt it: she grew responsive to my serious mood, and did not laugh when presently I began to quote poetry. Poetry and Cupid are in alliance; the other arts are of little service to him. Painting perhaps may be so on rare occasions, architecture never; and music, unless the lover be a skilled performer and have an instrument ready to hand, is seldom available; but the wings of love beat rhythmically, and poetry is always his interpreter. I had read and remembered a good deal of verse, but never before had I repeated it aloud. Now I was reciting the verses I recalled of 'Love in the Valley'. It seemed quite natural; the freedom of relationship achieved by difference of sexes is indeed amazing. Was it conceivable that I could have found myself declaiming Meredith to a young shopman, and one whom I had only been acquainted with for a few hours?

'It's like music!' she exclaimed. 'Please say that verse again.'

I rolled out the lines in my best style, for I loved them:

> Shy as the squirrel that leaps among the pine tops,
> Wayward as the swallow overhead at set of sun,
> She whom I love is hard to catch and conquer,
> Hard, but oh, the glory of the winning were she won.

'A great lady, some one almost out of reach,' was her comment.

'No! I think a farmer's daughter,' I said.

She seemed contemplative. I took her hand again: we had quite lost sight of the others.

It may be generally stated that the higher the respect a man feels for a woman the less directly will he make love to her. With the rustic wench he goes through no preliminaries, but straightway kisses her; the lady in his own station he approaches with deferential wooing; the lady hardly in his own station invites more speed. Annette had seemed to belong to the last of these categories. I had held her hand half an hour after we had met, and I had counted on a rapid development of our flirtation; but I found myself checked, not by any coldness on her part, but by a feeling that there was a quality in her nature that asked for and would appreciate a pause in my advances. My attitude to her was changed. I no longer held her hand as a matter of course, but with the feeling that it was a privilege.

We went on talking for a long time. I made her tell me about her home and of her work and of the books she liked. Though she was evidently proud of her mother and glad to speak of her mother's family, she was equally proud of her father, who was only a works manager who had risen from the post of foreman; and though she said she did not care for the shop and was learning shorthand with a view to getting into an office, she was not in the least ashamed of her occupation. Obviously she was not well educated, but how many of the girls I knew, who had every opportunity, were much better in this respect. She seemed to be full of intelligent appreciation, which made it interesting to talk to her about the books I liked and give suggestions for her future read-

ing. I could see she liked the serious way I was treating her. And then I gave her a glimpse of my own surroundings at home and took her on an imaginary journey through our country, ending at my tower, which I exhibited to her with affectionate pride.

'Oh!' she exclaimed, 'I almost feel I am there. It makes Birmingham and the shop and all our ordinary life seem thousands and thousands of miles away.'

'So it is,' I replied. 'We're in wonderland to-night.'

'We've lost the others,' she said. 'Oughtn't we to be turning back? It's getting rather late.'

'Does it matter?' I asked.

The daylight was gone and the moon was growing bright above the darkened valley. Our path crossed a cornfield and reached the edge of a brook we had heard rippling near us. We had missed the footpath and found ourselves under a great tree whose branches spread across the water. I remember how we stood half resting against one of its gnarled limbs listening to the song of the brook and watching it flash out of black shadows into little moonlit pools.

'Why go any farther,' I said, pressing her hand. My heart was beating fast: a longing to take her in my arms was mingled with a sudden shyness.

She did not answer, and I think a shyness like my own was affecting her while almost unconsciously we drew close to each other. What magic is there like the touch of a girl? All my vision of life, all that was myself was changed by

it then. The secret of the beauty that hid in the moonlight and in the song of the brook seemed suddenly revealed. And she who had wrought this wonder! no goddess, no glorious princess; but a girl from a shop in Birmingham whom I had known for a few hours. Yet was she not then a goddess—a princess beautiful in form, mysterious, warm-hearted and sweet, and perfect in her maidenhood?

'How beautiful it all is,' she said.

'How beautiful! and it is you who make it so beautiful to me,' I whispered.

'I?' she said. 'You hardly know me.'

'I feel that I have always been thinking of you.'

'And in a day or two you will almost have forgotten me.' She was leaning against my arm, and I held her closer. 'No,' she said with a quick inbreath. Then her hand that was in mine tightened its clasp and she went on hurriedly, 'I don't care what you think of me, at least I do, but it makes no difference—I mean a lady, ladies like you know wouldn't come out with you like this and—and let you make love to them. You know I'm not in their position and I'm not expecting you to think I am. You'll go away and not think much about me and I must do the same about you; but—but all the same I'm fond of you, Nick, and I'm going to let you make love to me to-night.'

What an invitation! The next moment she was in my arms and I knew for the first time in my life the incomparable sweetness of a kiss that expresses love.

I have perhaps told more than I ought. A love scene is a sacred thing at which there should be no onlookers; and I will tell no more of it. I would not provoke the mirth of the middle-aged or cynical reader, and as to the young and romantic, I will ask them to put themselves in similar circumstances with that one person in the world they would most desire to be near, and finish the scene to their own satisfaction.

When I returned to the inn after taking Annette home I found Brian alone in the parlour waiting for me. I was still in a state of exaltation which I made a great effort not to show. 'If the bar's not closed, what do you say to a drink?' I suggested, and as he accepted the suggestion I ordered a couple of bottles of beer and proceeded to fill my pipe.

Brian's good manners extended even to me, and I was glad he did not directly question me with a 'Well, how did you get on?' or anything of that sort; but I could see that he was restless, and before long he expressed his feelings, coming to the point at once, as he always did.

'Adventure in love,' he said suddenly, 'is possible only to men without consciences.'

'Adventure!' I echoed.

'Yes,' he replied; 'making love to women you either cannot or would not marry. There are men who have no more scruples about love affairs than they had in the old love romances; but the world has changed and women have changed. If it's more than a mere flirtation

you're stopped if you have a conscience. If you don't mean to marry a girl, where does your adventure lead you? Where would it lead her if she consented? '

It was evident that Brian's love affair had proceeded on different lines from mine.

' These girls, these friends of ours, haven't the safeguards of ladies,' he went on, ' and their lives are dull; I expect the men they know are dull too. They're dying for adventures. There's something of the old hunter in all of us. To have opportunities and throw them away! To be a laggard in love! It seems almost unmanly. But don't you think it may be sometimes the really chivalrous thing? '

' Oh, I don't know, it depends upon circumstances, I suppose,' I answered, and added with pride, ' Annette needs no safeguards.'

' No, perhaps not, she's very sensible, and she's Irish, and you're a steady-going old fellow; but the fact is, Nick, I can't trust myself, and I'm glad we're off to-morrow. What do you say to an early start? '

I had to explain that I had promised to stay another day. Something, some false shame prevented my telling him that I had actually made a proposal of marriage to Annette.

' Well,' he said, rather taken aback. ' I'm going on. I think you're foolish, but it's not for me to lecture you.'

' Look here,' I protested, ' I've promised. You might as well stay. I'll promise you it's only for one more day.'

He hesitated. He was evidently tempted to stay—I saw that by the expression of his face; but after a moment's reflection he replied firmly, 'No, there are times when the only thing you can do is to run away.'

'Have you said good-bye?'

'Yes, I said good-bye, but I hardly think she believed I meant it. She said she would not say good-bye. I would stay if—— No, I'm going.'

As he had decided I arranged with him that I would make up for lost time by taking the train and join him a day later at Taunton. When I came down to breakfast next morning I found that he had risen early and had already departed on his journey.

Now here was a spectacle for the middle-aged cynic! Two young gentlemen meet a couple of pretty shop-girls away on a holiday and make love to them. They find the ladies ready for an adventure, but instead of taking advantage of their opportunities they become ridiculous. One runs away, and the other proposes marriage. Well, let them laugh. The ardour of youth may lead us into splendid difficulties, and its chivalry may make us look absurd; but the caution of cynical middle age leads no whither, and its gallantry leads to the devil.

It would be incorrect to say that my feelings for Annette had in any way changed by next morning, but being of a practical turn of mind I was a little startled when I awoke on remembering that I was engaged to be married. Perhaps,

strictly speaking, it hardly amounted to this. I had made the proposal and Annette had postponed her consent. I could see she thought I was acting on an impulse and was firm in her refusal to agree to any definite pledges. But I knew that her heart had already consented.

When I arrived at the farm she was already in the orchard, talking to her friend, who, directly she caught sight of me, went into the house. I quickened my pace and Annette came to meet me, her face all smiles and blushes, but after we had greeted and I had said to her some of those things which I am not going to record, I noticed that she wore a rather troubled expression.

'Is Mr. Barry gone?' she said. 'He sent a note to Helen. And you've come to say good-bye.'

'Time enough for that,' I answered, 'we'll say good-bye to-night.'

'No,' she said, 'I shall not be here to-night. Helen has suddenly made up her mind to go home by the two o'clock train. I can't stay alone.'

'What nonsense,' I exclaimed, 'she must stay. We'll persuade her. Why should she want to go?'

I surmised that her decision had something to do with Brian's departure or the note she had received from him. 'Even if she does go you're not bound to,' I added.

'No, Nick,' she said. 'I couldn't stay on here alone and with you here. I know mother wouldn't like it.'

I wanted to get farther from the house, and led her into the fields beyond the orchard.

'It's perhaps just as well I have to go to-day too,' she said rather wistfully.

Now this was a remark requiring explanation, and of course I asked her what she meant.

'Do you feel quite the same about things—about me, as you did last night?' she asked.

'Annette! can you possibly doubt it? Don't you know that I love you better than anything else in the world?'

'Oh, Nick, do you really mean it?' she exclaimed, a flush rising to her face as she spoke. 'I've been thinking a great deal since we parted last night,' she continued. 'We only met two days ago. It is different for me. I am sure I want you: you would give me a new world. Oh, and it would give me yourself too. But I have nothing to give except my love. And if afterwards you thought it was foolish I couldn't bear it if you gave me up. I don't count on it now. I could get along all right without you, I think, but I couldn't bear to lose you afterwards.'

We were hidden from observation, and for answer I took her in my arms.

'If I could only be sure,' she said breathlessly when I released her. 'I love you better every minute—but look at it, Nick.'

'I don't want to look at anything but you.'

'I'm in a shop,' she protested. 'My father is a manager in a works, he used to be only a foreman. Your people are in quite a different position.'

'My dear girl, what on earth does it matter?' I said impatiently.

'If you married me your people would not like it; they wouldn't know my people. I couldn't bear them to be despised. Now if you were one of the young men in the shop I should feel quite differently about it.'

'Oh, thank God I'm not!' I exclaimed so fervently that she was obliged to laugh.

'Sweetheart,' I said, 'you're talking nonsense. I'm prouder of winning your love than anything else in the world could make me.'

Still she persisted. 'I have some pride, Nick,' she said. 'Yesterday we were lovers. I was as independent as you were. I made love to you just as much as you did to me. I was out for a lark just as you were. But marriage is different—we're not equals in that, and I won't make any promise or let you make any promise unless I am quite sure you are certain of yourself. I couldn't. I couldn't bear your giving me up afterwards.'

How little did I think as I stood at her side swearing eternal fidelity that my constancy could wane. Though she was younger than I she was wiser, and she was also truer-hearted.

Before we parted she made a stipulation that I must give her some proof that I was sure of myself before she would consent to an engagement. 'You can prove it all right,' she said. 'You can come and see me if you like after awhile. If you feel the same for me when you come, if you do come, then—— Oh, then——'

'How soon can I come?' I asked.

'In a year?' she smiled inquiringly. 'No, I see that's too long. Six months? Well, it will depend on your letters if you write. Three months if you like, or—sooner if you must; but only come if you feel you *must* come.'

After that I would listen to no more of her hesitation and scruples, but behaved as an accepted lover, and began telling her about my prospects and plans for the future; of my decision, now finally made, to go into the Falcon business, and of my hope of some day being able to go back to Ireland and restore my ruins and take her to live there. I took her back to the farm and we parted at the bottom of the orchard in the kindly shelter of a haystack. As a parting present I gave her a charm I had on my watch-chain, a four-leaved shamrock in a little locket, and she ran to the house to find something of her own for me. What she gave me was a tress of her hair, not a mere curl or a lock but a beautiful long thick tress, a gift that was the very expression of her warm generous nature.

'Do not come unless you feel that you *must* come,' she repeated, 'and remember if you don't come I shall not be angry with you, Nick.'

Her eyes had a grave perplexed look, as though she were questioning her own heart and the stability of the devotion I expressed so confidently; but after I had left her and turned for a last signal there was a happy smile on her face as she waved farewell.

CHAPTER IV

GRANTRY PARK

The last day of our tramp had come; the west country with its beautiful little villages was over the horizon behind us. The first indications of our approach to a great manufacturing town were the frayed edges of the country roads, the lines of telegraph poles, the hoardings with advertisements of purgatives and cigarettes and carrion juice, and the appearance of common little villas. Then came the beginning of a tram line, a village in which the old houses were lost among the new, and the old inn converted into a modern tavern. Then the road became a street of red brick houses nearly all of one pattern with a few square yards of garden in front of them. This road or street, which appeared to be miles long, ran between slag heaps and pit mounds, and led to a bridge which crossed the river into Mine Ferry. Here the scene had a sort of infernal picturesqueness. Both banks of the river were lined with ironworks, factories and coal wharves. They were all black: the barges moored along the quays were black, and the water of the river where it was in shade

was black, though where the sunlight fell on it it shone in sombre gold. A little higher up an iron railway bridge spanned the river, the white steam of the constantly passing trains flashing out on the general blackness and then dissolving. The remains of a Baronial castle, once the sole seat of power in all that region, stood forlornly on a mudbank half hidden by a gas works.

'The world has got into a wrong rut,' said Brian. 'If progress means that people have to spend their lives in places like this, thank God it hasn't reached Ireland.'

The prospect of the scene of my future labour was not encouraging, but half an hour later I met people who found it stimulating rather than depressing. We carried out our plan of calling on Brian's mother's friends, the Merthyrs, in Mine Ferry before picking up our luggage and going out to Grantry. We had tea with this remarkable couple, remarkable because they had shown the possibility of a feat comparable to the passage of a camel through the eye of a needle; for though they were rich people and might have lived anywhere they chose on the earth, they had made their home in these grimy surroundings, devoting themselves to the duty which seemed to be their pleasure of brightening the lives of the people around them. We had a talk about the effects of industrial progress and the evils it produced, a theme on which Brian grew eloquently indignant, but they took quite a different view and held that the world was moving in the right, indeed the inevitable direction, and that the evils

which accompany every movement had to be faced and remedied. Even then, but much more so afterwards when I knew them and their surroundings better, I felt that their presence 'made a sunshine in that shady place'.

'These people are Christians,' said Brian when we left. 'You and I call ourselves Christians. We are not.'

'No,' I said. 'I can't understand it. I don't particularly want to serve my fellow-creatures, nor do you—unless they happen to be Irish. I want to watch birds.'

We went by train to Grantry, which was about six miles distant from Mine Ferry. As we had not mentioned the hour of our arrival there was no carriage to meet us, but at the station we saw an old cab, which I afterwards found was chiefly used as the local funeral coach, and hired it. We passed through a village which would have been picturesque but for the intrusion of some suburban-looking villas, and drove for half a mile along a great wall that bordered Grantry Park. The contrast to everything we were accustomed to in Irish country houses began at the gates. Instead of the little one-storied whitewashed lodge, with jolly half-dressed children running about, and fowls on the doorstep, there was an imposing stone gate-house, and if there were any children and fowls they were discreetly hidden away. The avenue—in England they call it the drive unless it is bordered by trees—instead of showing signs of being used by farm carts was kept like a garden path with its grass edges trimmed. In

the park there was a herd of tame fallow deer, and some cattle that looked as if they had been groomed—indeed every detail of the place spoke of something that had to be paid for, instead of, as with us, something that had to be made to pay. The house, a fine Georgian mansion, stood on a rise of ground; sheltering trees grew close on its east side, allowing only glimpses of the roofs of the elaborate stables and out-buildings, and along the southern side of the house was a terrace, below which lay a formal garden with yew hedges and statues. On the terrace as we drove by we saw a peacock and a bishop.

We found our hostess, a pleasant and remarkably good-looking lady, in the garden, and received a cordial welcome. Yes, of course, I was Sophy's son, and Brian was Isabel's. And how time flew! They were girls when she saw them last, and now we were young men, and they, alas, were gone! And had we had tea, or would we prefer a whisky and soda?—dinner was not till eight o'clock. And which of us was the naturalist, and which the politician? and which of us was coming into the business? She had heard all about us from Margretta and from Mary, who was quite ridiculous in her enthusiasm about Ireland. Eustace was at Aldershot, and Dick and Mary were playing tennis, and here came her cousin, Jerry Hook, who would take us to the tennis lawn.

Mr. Jeremy Hook, a lame young man, who seemed to be a year or two older than ourselves, had a large head, a worn face and a whimsical smile. He asked us a few questions, and seemed

surprised to hear that Brian had never been in England before, and that my own knowledge of the country was only that of my school days.

'England's a mildewed nation,' he said, 'and is getting worse every year. It has a great past and is living on its reputation. We're the most backward people in Europe; we have an inheritance we're too slack to guard, and if we go to war with a great power and escape a licking it will be more than we deserve.'

Brian looked at him in amazement, and I was thoroughly taken aback,—the point of view was so different from the complacent satisfaction we had expected from an Englishman.

'You fellows belong, I suppose, to what is called the English garrison in Ireland?' he continued. 'No! Well it's unusual to find Nationalists in your class. So I suppose you don't care twopence about the Empire or whether we're beat or not?'

'I think a licking might do you a lot of good,' said Brian cheerfully.

Mr. Hook looked at him with a grin. 'Do I see before me one of those who believe in England's oppression of Ireland?' he asked. 'One who meditates on Ireland's past sufferings, who sees visions of Erin, proud but tearful, with a chain clamped round her beautiful ankle?'

I laughed, and he glanced at us in turn. 'I see,' he nodded to me, 'that you are not such a keen politician as your friend. But don't be angry with me, my son,' he said to Brian. 'I don't know whether you know how to govern

yourselves, but I'm quite sure we don't know how to govern you.'

He seemed to enjoy talking, and did it as if he were thinking aloud, which made it rather difficult to reply to his remarks. He offered us cigarettes as we walked through the gardens, and continued his commentaries. 'That gentleman on the terrace,' he said, 'is the Bishop of Isipingo, and the ladies he is talking to are the Dowager Lady Chepstow and her daughter, Miss Field, the author of a hymn which the Bishop has translated into Zulu or something full of strange native sounds called clicks. You must get him to recite it to you.'

Meanwhile we approached the tennis lawn, where a game was proceeding, and I recognised Mary among the players.

'You see Dick Falcon?' said our guide, 'a bit fatter, I expect, than he was when you knew him at school,—his partner is my sister Clara, who's on a visit here. Mary's partner is Lord James Boscobel-Oake, Jimmy B'loke. He's a son of the Duke of Bedminster. The family name's Boscobel-Oake, but they pronounce it B'loke. The man on the seat here,—I suppose I must introduce you,—is Mr. George Pomfrey. I'll ask your opinion of him afterwards.'

To this gentleman, an imposing-looking person of about forty, with a heavy jaw, dark eyes, and a large moustache, bushy eyebrows, and a nose like a bird of prey, we were introduced. He turned slightly towards me and extended his left hand, which I mechanically took. Brian, however, was

prepared, and when the left hand went out also to him with a 'Ha! how-d'ye-do,' he allowed it to remain extended without making any sort of response, a proceeding which, judged by the expression of his face, caused keen delight to Mr. Hook.

'Now, if you had been people of importance,' he said as we passed to the other side of the court, 'he would have been very gracious. You should see him kow-towing to a duke. But don't let me prejudice you. He's a sort of relation and in the Falcon business. I am too. It's a refuge for the unprovided for in the family.'

I told him I was probably coming in also, and he said he had fully expected to hear it.

In the fat young man with the jolly face and his trousers reaching up to his chest I hardly recognised my school-fellow, Dick Falcon. Mary, intent on the game, had not seen us before, and now flew over to us.

'Welcome!' she cried. 'You're welcome kindly! I learned that in Ireland. They all said it to me. I came down in the pony carriage to meet two trains and then gave you up.'

We had a cordial greeting from Dick, who, though no older than myself, gave the impression of benevolent middle age. 'Well, governor,' he said to Jerry Hook, 'been describing us all to them, eh? Where's my pipe?' he added in a tone of resentment, addressing us all, and Mr. Hook explained that he was constantly losing things and expecting others to find them for him.

Mary rather reluctantly went back to finish her

set, and our guide took us on through the gardens and round to the stables, keeping up his candid comments and fragments of biography, and making remarks for his own amusement and our enlightenment on English society and habits almost as if we were foreigners.

'You see we belong to what we consider the upper class,' he remarked, 'though we have lost most of the attributes of aristocracy and we condescend to make money in business. There is also an affluent commercial middle class which you probably have not met, as I understand that, outside Belfast, it hardly exists in Ireland. They are the most representative modern English class, and you meet them in every hotel and golf club and seaside place and first-class railway carriage. The grandfathers drop their H's, the fathers are over particular about them, and the sons go to public schools and have quite grand accents. We have a fine collection of them in this neighbourhood—the Podmores and the Bullmans and the Clarence-Perkses'; he rolled out the names as if they composed a line of verse. 'The Bullmans you will like, though they are the most insular, the most English family in the county. I believe Mr. Wilberforce Bullman, a political supporter of Mr. Falcon, and his wife will be dining here to-night. Yes, if you come into the business you'll know lots of the class. Then there's our working class, much more important than yours, which I understand is composed of agricultural serfs who earn ten bob a week. Ours is a dreary mob, which our industrial system has turned into machines.'

I laughed, and Brian said slyly, 'Don't you feel almost ashamed you're an Englishman?'

'Yes, my son, I do,' he replied, 'and what's more, I often feel ashamed that I belong to the human race. After all, there's not much to choose between the best and the worst of us.'

It was hard to tell whether he was speaking seriously or not. When we got back to the house and parted to dress for dinner I reflected that he had hardly said a good word for anything or anybody, and yet his face did not look unkind, and he had been very friendly to us.

In the assembling for dinner some of the party were in the drawing-room and some on the terrace on to which it opened. After a word with our hostess I went out and found Mary and her father walking arm-in-arm and talking gaily: it was evident that they were great friends. Mary looked very pretty in her white evening dress with her long dark-brown hair gathered in its fall by a blue ribbon. Mr. Falcon was a distinguished-looking man with keen grey eyes and a military bearing. Jerry Hook had told us that every one in the family and business, including himself, was afraid of him, and I felt at once that he was the sort of person before whom it was necessary for a young man to stand, as it were, at attention; but his greeting was very genial and easy.

'What have you been doing to Mary?' he asked. 'You've sent us back an Irish girl,—*Hibernior ipsis Hibernicis*. So you're thinking of coming over to us. We'll have a talk about it to-morrow morning. And I suppose this is the

Rebel,' he laughed, as Brian presented himself. Of course we *were* hardly more than boys, but there was something in Mr. Falcon's tone that made us feel very young and unimportant.

'I'm allowed to be at dinner to-night,' said Mary when her father had left us, 'and Mother gave me instructions that one of you was to take me in. Which is it to be?'

Brian and I bowed to each other with mock courtesy, and Mary seemed to enjoy the situation.

'We must leave the decision to you,' I told her.

'Isn't it very difficult to have to decide?' she said, looking at us with a smile that gave the first indication of coquetry I had seen in her, 'but if I must, I must. As Brian is going away to Africa and you will be here all the time, I'll choose him to-night. And the one left has to take Clara Hook. Come along, Nick, to be introduced.'

Our host and Lady Chepstow led us to the dining-room. Mrs. Falcon had the Bishop supporting her on her left and on the right Mr. Bullman. Miss Hook and I were near the middle of the table, and Brian and Mary nearly opposite. It was a spacious and beautiful room, and though I was then unable to appreciate the excellence of the furniture with which money and a collector's knowledge had combined to adorn it, I received an impression of artistic and restrained magnificence. The soft glow of light on the old mahogany table, the branching silver candlesticks, the beautiful flowers, and the ladies'

dresses gave the picture a brightness that was very pleasing. I had never seen anything quite like it. In our country houses in Ireland there may have been some good old furniture, but you hardly noticed it among the faded carpets and curtains; our dinner-parties always had a simplicity and homeliness; here, though there was nothing pretentious, everything was grander—'better done' would probably express it more accurately. The new experience interested me, and after I had had a glass or two of champagne I began to enjoy it. Miss Clara Hook, a girl about my own age with a pale face and large dark eyes, was an agreeable companion; the lady on my left, the hymnologist, was unattractive, but had nice tastes. She called my attention to the beautiful flowers on the table, pronouncing the word, as so many English women do, *flahs*. She startled Dick Falcon, who had taken her in to dinner, by asking him if he were not convinced that there would be flowers in heaven. 'Lots,' he managed to answer. She then asked my view, and I suggested that perhaps the Bishop might know, and she said it was all very mysterious. A little later on she asked me if I had brothers and sisters, and on hearing from me that I had one brother, she told me that she was one of seven. 'We are seven,' she said, 'and what is rather curious, I am the seventh child of a seventh child.'

The remark was overheard by Mrs. Bullman, who seemed to be a simple soul and who was much interested.

'Dear me!' she exclaimed, 'the seventh child of a seventh child. Hardly any relation!'

She made the remark very seriously and seemed puzzled when we laughed.

Brian, looking remarkably handsome and quite happy in his hostile surroundings, was promoting gaiety near him and making Mary laugh a good deal. The party was too large for general conversation, but after a while Jerry Hook, who probably liked an audience of more than one, drew several of those who were at our part of the table into a discussion by asking why it was that Irishmen were more gallant to ladies than Englishmen.

'Oh, come, but are they?' questioned Jimmy B'loke.

'They are really,' said Miss Hook; 'all those I have met.'

'I wonder is it because Englishmen are more honest?' Jerry suggested.

'That remark does not better the Englishman's case,' said the lady next to him, who I heard was interested in the higher education of women and kept a rain-gauge.

'Perhaps,' said Miss Hook, 'the reason why they are so gallant is that Irish women are so charming.'

'No, no,' exclaimed Brian. 'We make no distinction.'

'I suppose,' said Jerry, 'that gallantry is the profession of admiration whether you feel it or not.'

'I'm certain of one thing,' I made my con-

tribution, 'that our poor people, our peasantry in Ireland, are more gallant to women than they are anywhere else.'

'But are they truthful?' asked Jerry.

'Yes,' said Mary boldly.

'Well done, Mary. Stand up for your own country,' said Brian.

'But surely, Mary, you're not Irish,' said Miss Field. 'Ah yes! now I remember Mr. Falcon's a brother of Lord Lohort.'

'On both sides I'm Irish,' said Mary.

'The Falcons are Anglo-Irish,' said Mr. Pomfrey, 'but they're English now. Mary's English all right.'

'Mr. Pomfrey knows nothing about Ireland and nothing about *me*,' said Mary coldly.

The lady who kept the rain-gauge brought us back to our topic. 'Do we want, do we really like this sort of ridiculous deference you call gallantry from men?' she asked. 'We should treat each other as equals.'

'No!' I protested, my champagne encouraging me to talk, 'we should look up to each other. Our deference is to the charm of the qualities we do not possess ourselves.'

'That's just what I tell my husband,' said Mrs. Bullman. '"Let each reign in their own departments, Wilberforce," I say to him. "The tannery for you, the home for me."'

'But is it altogether a matter of nationality?' said Miss Hook. 'Why are sailors so gallant? more so even than soldiers.'

'Really, my dear lady, really! I must dispute

that,' said Mr. Boscobel-Oake, who was in the Guards.

'Their devotion to ladies, which is beyond question,' said Jerry, 'is perhaps due to their seeing so little of them. They are so short a time on shore.'

'We know you're not serious,' said his sister, 'but no Irishman *could* have said that.'

Mrs. Bullman asked Mr. Pomfrey if he knew Ireland, and he replied that he had been to the Dublin Horse Show, and that was as much of Ireland as he wished to see.

'But I have always heard that it is very beautiful,' said Mrs. Bullman.

'I agree with the remark some fellow made that Ireland would be a very good country if it could be put under water for twenty-four hours,' said Pomfrey.

'Oh, because of the people,' said Mrs. Bullman. 'There's a hymn about that, isn't there?'

Where every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile.

'But that surely was Ceylon in "Greenland's Icy Mountains",' the hymnologist corrected her.

'Greenland *or* the Emerald Isle, as Ireland is sometimes called,—the same place,' said Mrs. Bullman with a little condescension.

The good lady's silliness only made us laugh, but there was something in Pomfrey's tone in speaking of Ireland that seemed to show an intention of being offensive.

'We've been too indulgent to Ireland,' he

said. 'The country's priest-ridden and rebellious and wants stern government. These so-called patriots and politicians,—we put 'em in prison sometimes, but that's not good enough. They want shootin' or hangin'.'

Brian's eyes blazed. In other surroundings I knew the sort of answer he would have made, and I was surprised at his silence. Mary reddened and seemed about to retort, but I suppose her courage failed.

'And yet the people seem so nice and have such charming manners,' said Miss Field.

'Every bit of it insincere, just their *blarney*,' said Pomfrey. 'No! really I don't think we need go to Ireland for instruction in good manners.'

'And where would you like to be sent, sir?' Brian asked in the tone of an interested inquirer; 'Ireland's conveniently near'; and while the shaft was penetrating Pomfrey's slow intelligence, Jerry Hook, whose face was beaming with satisfaction, suggested France as an alternative. Mrs. Bullman said she had been told by her husband that the French had become most rude and insulting to the English, and he was so angry at the horrid cartoons they had made of the Queen that he had forbidden their daughter, Georgina, to continue her French lessons at school. Jerry commended his patriotism, but said he hesitated to suggest Germany for the purpose they had in view; and Miss Field, who had not perceived the malice of Brian's remark, observed that the Germans had deplorable table manners, after which Mr.

Pomfrey was left without a chance of recovering himself.

We continued to talk nonsense.

> You should be mannerly at table,
> At least as far as you are able,

I quoted, and Jerry Hook spoke with enthusiasm of Chaucer's exemplary lady, 'who let no morsel from her lippes fall'.

'Of course she didn't, why should she? it would have been most unladylike,' said Mrs. Bullman.

'"Well could she carry a morsel and well keepe,"' quoted Jerry. 'Yes, she stuck to it,' and our laughter was so hearty we attracted the attention of the serious people beyond us.

'The centre of gravity ought to be in the middle of the table,' said the Bishop, 'but it seems to have found its way to the ends.'

A little laugh of appreciation greeted this appropriate speech, during which our hostess exchanged signal smiles with Lady Chepstow and rose to leave the room.

Dick Falcon and I had a little talk about old Winchester days over a glass of his father's 1870 port, but it was not long before we followed the ladies. The procedure was quite informal. Some of the guests went to the drawing-room, others strolled on to the terrace, and others settled down to play bridge. Seen from the darkness outside, the lighted room with its glow of soft colour and the groups of beautifully attired ladies made a pleasing picture. Clara Hook was playing on

the piano, apparently for her own enjoyment, for few seemed to be listening. It was the second movement in Beethoven's Sonata in C Major she told me when I came in to ask her the name of the music that had thrilled me. With the memory of its beauty in my mind I went away along one of the garden paths dreaming of Annette. It was only two days since we had parted, and I had hardly thought of her all the evening until now; and now how far away she seemed! How far from this new world of people in which I found myself. Our meeting, our love, seemed all a dream. And we were engaged to be married! Did I regret my haste? No! a thousand times No! If she had been among these people of society would she not have held her own? Could any lady in the company compare with her for grace or beauty or sweetness? How could I have forgotten her even for a few hours?

The great trees in the park stood out in the moonlight; shadowy figures moved on the terrace; in the eastern sky the lights of Mine Ferry and its furnaces made a dull red glare. That lurid light above the woodland, telling of dreary streets and humming workshops, of noise and heat and night-long labour, brought me a sharp reminder of the scenes in which I should have to spend my life. That distant gleam of desecrated sky transfigured the world. The sound of the wind in the trees had not the same significance, nor the fields the same mystery, nor the stars the same wonder as those I knew at night in our own secluded homeland.

Next morning I had a short interview with Mr. Falcon, at which it was settled that I was to begin my business life at once after a short visit home. This meant leaving the University without taking my degree, which he said would be of no commercial use and would involve the loss of a valuable year. He considered that the University life was too easy and pleasant, making it all the more difficult for a young man to face the routine of an office. He expressed a hope that I would put my heart into the work. 'Unless you like it,' he said, 'you will not get on. I always liked it. It's still my sport. I run a company meeting in the same spirit that I would hunt a pack of hounds. You have a good chance: we want young men of the family coming on in the business. Eustace has no taste for it, and Dick?—well I don't expect much of him, but it occupies him and he likes pottering among the machinery. Mary has all the brains.'

Though he had been particularly pleasant, almost casual, I felt that magnetism of his presence which Jerry Hook had spoken of, and was sure that when the time came for my probation there would be little hope for me if I pottered about among the machinery.

We had a shoot that day, and Brian and I, though our guns were borrowed and driven partridges were not familiar to us, had the satisfaction of acquitting ourselves with credit. We had a bag which seemed to us enormous, though it was nothing unusual to our companions, a lunch, of which the same might be said, at a farm,

where the ladies of the house party joined us, and a very pleasant day, though it lacked that elemental fascination of sport which comes, as in our rough shooting at home, when you have to hunt for your game as well as kill it. A little dance in the evening concluded the day's entertainment.

Brian, who was leaving next morning—I, having no special business in London, was staying a couple of days longer—came to my room for a talk as I was going to bed.

'Well,' he asked, 'what do you think of this sort of life?'

I said I found it agreeable.

'Oh yes! agreeable enough for a day or two; but it's all wrong. I'm glad I'm off. I'm an enemy, a guest under false pretences.'

'I know,' I laughed. 'You hardly liked to drink the champagne. Nothing but good manners and the fear of being thought a prig prevented your telling the men in the smoke-room that they ought to earn their living.'

'That's about true,' he replied. 'Everything here shows the acceptance of an established order of things which I want to see abolished. Wealth and comfort and amusement! it's all taken for granted. The hardships and discomforts of the working class, these things, they believe, have to be.'

'The Falcons are good employers. The Merthyrs told us that,' I said, always argumentative when Brian became aggressive.

'That may be,' he answered; 'but the industrial system is wrong. Look at the squalid streets in Mine Ferry where the people live whose

work provides the yachts and grouse moors and London houses. It's all taken for granted. Everything is established,—the industrial system, the social distinctions, the Church, the moral code. You heard them talking in the smoking-room.'

I laughed, remembering the jubilant way in which Dick Falcon, when he had told us that some of them were going up to London next week, had said, 'Feel it's about time we looked up our lady friends,' whereupon Jerry Hook had explained that the ladies he referred to did not belong to our own class. 'For our ladies,' he said, 'there exists a scheme of Protection in morals; for the men the liberty of Free Trade.'

'Yes,' said Brian, 'these people are loyal subjects, supporters of the Church, kind and neighbourly and generally honourable, but they seem to have no ideals beyond a vague patriotism, and no aims beyond making arrangements for an agreeable life. They are entrenched behind their common point of view as an estate is guarded by its walls. If there was any downright oppression it would be easier to fight against it, but it's the injustice that has become rooted in the established order of things that baffles us.'

I had a feeling that there was a good deal of truth in what he said, but I saw no practical alternative to the existing order of things, and was a little impatient at his moralising.

'Be off to bed!' I replied. 'I am too sleepy to argue with you, and haven't the least wish to alter anything in the world.'

But I was not sleepy. When he had gone I

sat down to write to Annette, and I found this not quite so easy as might have been expected. Once or twice during the day—at the shooting lunch, at the dance—I had felt a sudden stab of questioning doubt as to whether I had not done a rash thing in asking Annette to marry me, in pledging all the future on the inspiration of one evening. More than once I had felt how wise she was, how admirable in refusing to agree to an engagement until I had put my love to a test. Then had come a memory of her adorable face and figure, and I was wroth with myself and returned to my allegiance. Such is the love of youth—or rather youth's falling in love. We are captivated very quickly and very quickly escape from captivity. The attraction which drew us instantly to the beloved one is sometimes so strong that it prevails through absence and trial, and proves itself to be true love; sometimes it is dissipated by other influences; generally it is a question of propinquity: for the sex attraction between young people is in one respect like that of gravity between two material bodies, which we are taught by science varies inversely as the square of their distance apart.

CHAPTER V

LONDON

I JOINED Brian at an out-of-date hotel in Covent Garden, which I had chosen because I had read of it in *Pendennis*. His friends, the Merthyrs, were in London paying a visit to an East End Settlement in which they were interested, and he had spent his evenings before my arrival with them. All his preparations for the journey were made. Michael Byrne, who had taken Trenta to his relatives in Vienna, was expected immediately, and at the end of the week I was to go down to Southampton to see the travellers off.

Great cities have always seemed to me the least interesting parts of the world: the greater the city the less the interest; for where they are merely industrial, like Manchester or Chicago, they are without beauty or romance; or when they are 'half as old as time' or renowned in history, like Rome or London, their growth, their new developments, have so obscured the ancient glory, so isolated and dishonoured their high places, that the wonder of the tradition is lost in the modernity. Numbers without ordered array, magnitude with-

out design, are not stimulating but depressing to the imagination.

In Westminster Abbey, in spite of the crowd of visitors that was being taken on the daily round of inspection, I found a gateway into the past, and while the organ was sounding and the glory of coloured glass falling through the rose window in the South Transept on the monuments of the poets, I saw pathways into the infinite and forgot that I had just travelled by the underground railway. But elsewhere I found little in London that struck my imagination. How could one picture Chaucer on the riverside wharves or Dr. Johnson in the Fleet Street of to-day? It was its vastness and its homelessness that impressed me. Brian dragged me into the lowest quarters of the East End, and seemed disappointed that they were not lower. We saw dreariness not squalor, shabby respectability not suffering, little to kindle the fires of indignation, everything to depress the spirits. And in the West End those interminable streets and squares of large painted sallow houses without individuality, into which such large stores of the world's wealth poured, and out of which, so Brian said, so small a contribution to the world's welfare trickled, were almost as depressing as the ugliness of the slums.

To most young men the chief attraction of London lies in the facilities it gives for what is called a *spree*; and though it may be interesting to see the crowded life of the streets, or look in at the picture galleries or watch people and carriages in the parks for awhile, it is the night,

not the day, which is alluring; it is the dinner with friends at the gaily lighted restaurant, the subsequent visit to the theatre or music hall, all intermingled with a consciousness of feminine propinquity, that makes the real attraction. There is always the knowledge that quite near and waiting to welcome you are young women who ask for neither courtship nor loyal service nor marriage settlements, but only 'a little present', as they would call it, of a sum not larger than you have just paid for the champagne at your dinner party. In surroundings where daily life offers little episode there is room here for adventure, though it is hardly romantic; and there is always the fascination of the forbidden and of being tempted, even when you go into temptation fortified by good resolutions. In biographies it is usual to slur over certain activities of youth with a general allusion to the 'sowing of wild oats'. It is a picturesque phrase conveying an indictment without censure, suggestion of adventure not commendable but forgivable, perhaps inevitable for the bold of spirit. It is applicable of course to young men: if the same adventures were made by young women they would not be described as wild oats but harlotry; and such it would be—for, however unfair the discrimination, it is quite certain that a woman's soul is more damageable through the flesh than a man's. But this sowing of wild oats is, I have little doubt, for a young man, a sordid and degrading business; it is the masquerade of brute desire in the semblance of love; it is without chivalry; it is accompanied by a

spurious hilarity and succeeded by a false cynicism; and though for the man there may afterwards be fields of promise to reap, for the woman the harvest is blighted. You may say it is inevitable or ask how it can be banished from our world, and I can only reply that I accept no evil as necessary because we have not yet found a remedy. These are reflections I made when I was older; at the time I am telling of, when our cousins gave us an introduction to those scenes that are hidden in the night of London, I joined them in a spirit of comradeship, and should have felt ashamed, felt the fear of being thought a prig or a greenhorn, if I had expressed my disapprobation to men who took the whole thing for granted, and who seemed unconscious that any moral problem was involved.

It was the evening when we dined with our cousins that took us into an inner circle of this hidden life. Eustace, on the eve of sailing with his regiment to South Africa, had come up from Aldershot, and the other members of the party were Dick Falcon, who was acting as host, Jimmy B'loke, Magner, a naval friend of Dick's, and Jerry Hook, who was in London on the business of the company. Brian had been reluctant in accepting the invitation, but having done so, seemed prepared to enjoy himself. It was in the first place a farewell celebration in honour of Eustace, and as both he and Brian were about to be severed from the pleasures provided by London it was understood that the present opportunity was to be made the most of. Brian and he were regarded as guests for whose entertain-

ment it was necessary for them to provide, dinner being but a preliminary instalment.

Jerry Hook, who in spite of his youth seemed to have considerable knowledge of the world and not to think the more highly of it on that account, was, I really believe, anxious to save Brian and me, whom he regarded as unsophisticated lads, from an introduction to the amusements our cousins had in view. His proposal that we should go with him to a concert at the Queen's Hall was received with derision by our hosts and without enthusiasm by ourselves.

'Well, good youths!' he said, holding up his glass of port to the light, 'go your way and "roll in the abominable", to borrow a phrase from Mr. Meredith, who, by the way, was referring to the habits of a dog.'

'Oh, dry up, Gov'nor,' replied Dick Falcon. 'Come along and enjoy your young self. If you don't do it now you will later on. You'll be breaking out when you're fifty and have grown-up daughters.'

We had all drunk enough to make us rather reckless and very uncritical, otherwise I do not see how we could have got through the music hall performance we witnessed without boredom. From the dreary programme of cheap music, foolish songs, and acrobatic contortions emerged one very funny and very vulgar 'comedian' and a ballet which was not without grace, though its attractions were almost wholly sexual. Far be it from me to say that among those half-clothed girls who composed it the majority were

immodest, or that while ready to exhibit three-quarters of their legs on the stage for an honest salary they would deign to show as much as a mere calf in private, but the exhibition is sexual and obliterates the womanhood of the individual girls in the seduction of their common attraction. Many of these ladies had friends in the audience, and Eustace hinted at introductions at a later hour; but I perceived that the real programme of the music hall was not on the stage but on the promenade behind the stalls. 'Come along and look at the paddock,' said Dick Falcon in one of the intervals, and his application of a race-course illustration when the horses were being led up and down was not inapplicable to that enclosure, where there was also a parade of inspection. I have heard of the street in Tokyo where the women sit in fine dresses behind plate-glass windows and the customer walks along and looks in and makes his selection. That is an officially recognised market-place, but the English music hall, though not under State benediction, provides, or did at the time of which I am writing provide, similar facilities. The whole scene, the fresh lads, the dissipated-looking middle-aged men, the painted women, the bad air and bad music, the smell of scent and Turkish cigarettes, filled me with disgust, and Brian looked very unhappy: we were neither of us at present in any danger of temptation.

Before the performance had come to its dreary end we drove away in cabs, I knew not whither. I was with Eustace, and understood we were all

to meet at some rendezvous for supper. After the garish theatre the streets, with their glowing lights and moving crowds, the narrow spaces of sky between the roofs, and our unknown destination gave me a feeling of the mystery of the great city, but it was only momentarily. We alighted at a respectable-looking little hotel in a dimly lighted by-street, and Eustace led me through the hall to a corridor which brought us to a bright supper-room. A rather pleasant-looking middle-aged French lady, who seemed to be in charge and to have expected us, exchanged friendly greetings with Eustace and indicated the table which was reserved for us. There were not many people in the room when we arrived, and I noticed that these, some men and some women, were as a rule alone, but were joined by new-comers as they entered: it was clearly a rendezvous. Our table was at the end of the room, and at a smaller one near it sat a couple that attracted my attention. The man was a coarse-looking creature of somewhere between forty and fifty, of a type I have since remarked as common among the more affluent citizens of the South American Republics. His companion did not look more than sixteen, and her long hair fell loose on her shoulders in the fashion of young girls. She was very pretty, very impudent-looking, and seemed but little occupied with her friend, for on the two or three occasions when our glances met she smiled in a way which suggested that she was quite ready to enter into new alliances. A moment or two later other

visitors who had the appearance of ladies entered, and Eustace rose to meet them. He introduced them to me as Gwen and Betty, told me that Betty had come specially to give me the pleasure of meeting her, and then left us to cultivate each other's acquaintance.

'And you don't remember me?' said she.

I protested that if ever we had met before I could not have forgotten her.

'Well,' she replied, 'I sold you a programme to-night at the *Alcazar*, and you took it without looking at me, but I looked at you and thought you seemed quite a nice boy or I wouldn't have accepted Mr. Falcon's invitation to meet you.'

Two more rather attractive-looking girls strolled up to our table and were received by Eustace. A minute later came Jimmy B'loke with a girl I recognised as one of the ballet, and then Brian and our naval friend, Magner, joined us. Dick Falcon followed by himself. Everything about him was round—his rather bald head, his pink cheeks, his stomach. He wore a white waistcoat, had a large rose in his buttonhole, and looked a picture of smiling content.

The young girl with the offensive-looking companion at the next table watched him sailing down the room to join us and burst out laughing —'Holy Moses!' she exclaimed, 'here comes a fairy!'

We settled down to supper—some oysters and other trifles and a good deal of champagne. I remember little about it except that there was no unseemly conversation and that there was nothing

to indicate that the ladies did not belong to a perfectly respectable if rather Bohemian class of society. The underlying and real character of the place was presently revealed in a scene which attracted attention beyond our own table. One of our guests it seemed had disappointed us, and Brian was without a special companion. This was noticed by the girl at the next table, who suddenly deserted her host and came over to the vacant chair. There was a laugh, but no other notice was taken of the intrusion.

'I thought you were looking lonely,' she said to Brian, 'so I've left my old nabob to smoke his cigar and I've come to cheer you up.'

'How old are you?' Brian asked without a smile.

'Sixteen, my lord,' she replied; 'just the age when girls fall in love. I've fallen in love with you.'

Her horrible patron edged his chair closer to our table. He looked angry but spoke civilly. 'May I be pardoned, gentlemen, for intruding,' he said, 'but I must keep my little friend in order.'

He was hardly noticed: the members of our party were fully occupied with each other and the champagne was making them merry. I was beginning to feel adventurous myself and found the soft glances of Betty very fascinating. Brian was deliberately attentive to the poor beautiful abandoned little girl who was next him and seemed determined to stand between her and her gross acquaintance. When the champagne came round he did not fill her glass and she protested, but in

vain. 'I'm looking after you while you're here,' he said.

'Oh, come along, Daisy,' exclaimed her patron. 'You're not a baby. We've had enough of this. Come along, it's time for us to be off.'

'She's not going with you,' said Brian.

'Oh!' she exclaimed. 'Who said so? I suppose I've something to say about that, your holiness.'

'You're not going with him,' Brian repeated.

Every one at the table was now attentive, and I have no doubt we attracted notice from other parts of the room.

The man rose and put his hand on the girl's arm. 'Now come along,' he said.

She looked at Brian. 'I'm going to take you home,' he said to her.

That word *home* had in this place none of its true meaning: to go home with a girl from here meant to go to the lodging of an outcast from home; and it was thus the girl took it.

'Well I never!' she said, apparently very pleased to find herself an object of rivalry. 'Here's a fix. You see I'm engaged for the evening to this gentleman, and I tell you he's promised me what'll make it worth my while, and I've got a dressmaker's bill to pay. But I like you very much, my Lord Chief Justice, and if you——'

She was a bright-witted girl, and I afterwards heard had had some engagements at inferior music halls. The glass or two of champagne she had drunk at dinner had made her quite reckless.

I shall never forget the extraordinary scene that took place in the next few minutes, nor have I ever witnessed anything more painful than the picture of this child putting herself up for auction.

'My dressmaker's bill is twenty-five pounds,' she said, 'and that's not the only one. I have to pay my way. Any advance upon twenty-five pounds?'

The man who claimed her seemed thoroughly aroused. All things probably had a money value for him, and he was no doubt rich.

I could hardly believe my hearing when Brian said to the girl, 'Very well, I'll give you fifty pounds.'

She looked astonished. 'No kid about it?' she exclaimed. 'Eh, but mind it's got to be cash. I don't take I O U's.'

'Seventy-five,' said the man.

We were all excited, but Brian seemed perfectly cool. He looked round the table and asked if we could finance him. Every one thought it an amazing bit of sport. Dick Falcon examined his pocket-book, which was full of notes, and both Eustace and I gave him a nod.

'A hundred pounds,' Brian said.

'Any advance?' cried the girl. 'One hundred pounds only bid for all this eligible leasehold property, immediate possession.'

The South American face was black with anger. 'Come along, Daisy, I'll give you a cheque for double the amount.'

'No, *sir*,' she replied with an imitation of his accent. 'This is a cash deal.'

'Well, take the little bitch and be damned to you!' said he, rising, 'and if you call yourself a gentleman——'

I thought Brian was going to strike him, but as his antagonist had already begun to retreat towards the door he turned to us with a grim smile.

'Well done, Gov'nor,' said Dick Falcon.

The rest of us were silent and our lady companions looked rather scared. Daisy beamed on us with an air of happy triumph. 'That's good business,' she exclaimed. 'I've got the boy I like and I've got the money too.'

Brian made a collection among us and said a word to the girl. 'I don't know what the devil I'm going to do with her,' he whispered to me. 'Come along, Daisy.'

'Good-bye, every one!' she said, dropping us a curtsey; and giving Dick Falcon a pat on his bald young head, added, 'Good-bye, Beauty.'

We laughed, but without much mirth. I think the elder women felt ashamed at this naked exhibition of the degradation of their sex. 'What a pity,' my companion, Betty, whispered to me, and I'm sure she meant what she said.

I feel sure I should have been in little danger of temptation if my companion had shown any sign of the commonness which I had associated with women of her class; but she had a quiet and pleasant manner, and there was a look of refinement in her face. I became sentimentally interested in her, and curious to know how such a girl could be our guest, prepared to give, or if

you like sell, herself to a chance acquaintance. Just as our party was breaking up Magner whispered a word or two to Betty and they exchanged nods of understanding. I was resentful at the familiarity, but what right had I to be so? Was my relationship to her that of a knight to his lady? A few minutes later we went off together, and after walking to the end of the quiet street to a thoroughfare, hailed a passing cab. The driver asked me for instructions, and I hesitated and turned to Betty, who gave him a destination. The man looked at me with a grin. 'All right, Mister,' he said to me, 'but of course you understands that when the lady gives the address it's always double fare.'

Looking back I feel the sadness of it all, sadness that a girl capable, I think, of giving love should have looked for and found pleasure in the loveless endearments of a stranger. And at the time I felt angry, almost jealous, that she could be the same to other men as to me. I questioned her about Magner, and she did not hesitate to say that he was one of her friends.

'Has he ever been home with you?' I persisted.

'What does it matter, you foolish boy!' she answered. 'If you want to know anything I'll tell you that I like you much better than him. Give me a kiss.'

That such a girl had friends, lovers, whatever you might call them, I of course knew, and I could have accepted the existence of those strangers without concern; but to share a relationship with a man I knew was repulsive. It was a situation

that no doubt constantly arises in the market-place of women. If I had not been excited by the wine I had drunk I might have gone no further; but my arm was round the girl's waist; her head was on my shoulder; I had reached a point from which retreat is seldom possible and I went on.

In the train on the way down to Southampton I heard the sequel to Brian's adventure: I did not tell him of mine. He admitted that his conduct had been rather mad, but that he had been filled with such fury at the prospect of leaving the child in the clutches of this satyr that he had acted on an impulse. As an inspiration it had come to him to take her to his friend, Mrs. Merthyr, at the East End Settlement, where she was staying, and finally with great difficulty, after using all his powers of comradeship and cajolery, he had gained her consent to accompany him, and had left her with her money for one night at all events with his friend. There was a possibility she might be induced to go with Mrs. Merthyr to a girls' seaside camp which she was interested in—he could not say; indeed he felt rather hopeless about it. 'But what an awful, what an infernal world we've had a sight of,' he said. 'If it were not for the other side of the picture it would be unbearable—I mean the world that contains women like Mrs. Merthyr who live to help these others: aren't they the salt of the earth?'

After saying good-bye to Brian at Southampton, where the sight of the departing ship made me long to be embarking with him on adventures in

unknown seas and lands, I went home for a week or two before entering on my new career.

Brian's departure and the events of the last month had made a change in my outlook: nothing seemed quite the same as it was when we were together in my camp; when I had looked forward to a pleasant country life and the pursuit of my favourite occupations, when I had not yet seen Annette, when I knew nothing of such scenes as I had been through in London. What troubled me most was a shameful feeling of disloyalty to Annette—perhaps not so much the reproach of my disloyal action as the consciousness that I did not love her enough to make the reproach keener. I seemed to have placed a barrier between her and me, and yet I did not feel any desire to remove it. I found it very difficult to write to her, and when I did write it was no love-letter. When she replied, her letter was only that of a friend. She must of course have noticed my cooling down, but whether or no this troubled her or caused her to feel any resentment there was not a word in her letter to indicate.

My decision to accept Mr. Falcon's offer met with great approval at home. I had seldom seen my grandfather so pleased; and Aunt Margretta, who saw in my prospective enrichment the only hope of preventing the sale of our property, loaded me with praise such as might have been fitting if I had been making a great sacrifice instead of merely accepting an excellent offer of a means of earning my living.

Rumours of my intended career spread through

her and Uncle de Courcy, who looked on me with a sort of awe. Neighbours congratulated me on having placed my foot on the first rung of the ladder of fortune. The people on the place regarded my fortune as already made. They had heard of Mr. Falcon as 'a terrible man, with money enough to sink a ship', and it was understood that I was to be his partner. John Nihil the stone-mason expressed a fear that like others who sought their fortunes abroad I would not come back. ''Tis always the same,' he said; 'the best of the young people going from us, and so 'twill be till we have a country of our own to stay in.'

I was not going very far away, but Ballyquin and Mine Ferry seemed worlds apart. In the week or two I spent at home, as I visited my old haunts I felt I was saying good-bye, not to them, but to something they had formerly given me, to a part of myself which I was leaving behind and could never again make my own.

CHAPTER VI

MY ROAD TO FORTUNE

I

Jerry Hook procured rooms for me in the village of Grantry at the house where he lodged himself. He had a comfortable sitting-room, which he had furnished with his own bookcases, some arm-chairs, and a piano. I had a smaller sitting-room, and after our evening meal, which we arranged to have together, we retired to our own quarters, Jerry being engaged until he went to bed in some studies the nature of which I did not immediately find out.

Within a very short time I learned what it was to be a person of no importance. I had been accustomed at home to that recognition which is shown to a member of an established family: among the people I was 'his honour'; now I was 'one of them young clurks at Falcon's', as I overheard myself described by my landlady to a neighbour in the lane; though afterwards, when it was known that I was a relation of the great people at Grantry Park, my status in the village improved. At the office I was also an insigni-

ficant figure. It was something of a humiliation, very much of an anticlimax, to end a University career and the prospect of an honours degree by having to learn the duties of a junior clerk, starting about level with the boys who had just left a Board School.

The greatest contrast between the life I had entered upon and that to which I had been accustomed was the unvarying regularity. I had to catch a train at the same minute every morning and present myself at the office at 9.30; there was an hour in the middle of the day for lunch, and at half-past five in the evening I left to catch another train. There was always the same stream of workpeople going out and coming in when the bell rang; the same work went on all the year round; there was no variety, as in the country, of seed-time and harvest, ploughing or threshing: in business there are no seasons.

By degrees I became acquainted with my neighbours at Grantry and my fellow-workers at the office. The daily train journey introduced me to many of the men who, like Jerry Hook and myself, went to business in Mine Ferry—the Podsons and the Bullmans, the Kitleys, the Toshers, and the Clarence-Perkses. At the office I was presented by Jerry Hook to the managers and heads of departments. Mr. Falcon gave me a few words of good advice, and said that although he would not see much of me he would hear how I was getting on from Mr. Fish, the head of the shipping department, under whose supervision I began my duties. Mr. Fish was friendly,

and congratulated me on my luck in being a relative of the governor's. Relations, he said, were bound to be pushed on unless they were too incapable, and quite right too; he had never had a relation to help him, but he had intense ambition: his motto was *excelsior*. After a few days he became quite confidential about the business and his colleagues. Of Mr. Falcon he spoke with bated breath. 'Everything that man touches,' he said, 'turns to gold'; of Mr. Hook he said that he had a sharp tongue but was always a gentleman, whereas Pomfrey (he omitted the Mr. in speaking of him) was not. 'Would a gentleman buy the stores for his house through the firm so as to get the trade discount? Would a gentleman sell his rabbits to the workmen?' Mr. Fish also spoke with a sense of injury about Mr. Blower, the head invoice clerk, who had invited him to dinner and had given him—what did I think?—*a beeve's heart*. 'I felt insulted,' he said. Pring, my fellow junior in the shipping office, had sporting inclinations. He spoke familiarly of racehorses and actresses. He said he had learned I was a relative of the governor's and asked if he 'acknowledged me'. Once or twice when our work kept us late I noticed that after the bell had rung he showed his independence by producing and putting on a ring. In due course I made the acquaintance of other heads of departments: Mr. Billet, the manager of the steel works; Mr. Goodself, of the foreign correspondence department; and others who welcomed me to the business and

talked agreeably of the matters which occupied their leisure hours, such as photography and the growing of tomatoes. Mr. Delcreedy, the chief accountant, who, whenever interested or excited, broke out in little beads of perspiration at the end of his nose, was introduced to me by Jerry as the High Priest of the establishment, the guardian of the sacred books. He would no more take a liberty with a private ledger, Jerry said, than he would with a lady; and so devoted was he to accounts that his light reading consisted of prospectuses, and his chief regret was that he had not been born a twin so that he might have come into the world by double entry. Mr. Delcreedy, who seemed accustomed to Jerry's pleasantries, joined in our laugh and said that I had probably found out that Mr. Hook loved his joke better than he loved the truth.

My daily travels between Grantry and Mine Ferry very soon made me acquainted with a good many of my neighbours. The first arrival at the station was always Mr. Wilberforce Bullman, the patriotic gentleman I had met at Grantry Park who had forbidden his daughter's French lessons. When Jerry Hook told him I was an Irishman, though Mr. Bullman evidently believed this was a misfortune, he reassured me very kindly. 'Every one can't be an Englishman,' he said. After him, always early, arrived numerous other members of the Bullman family, brothers and cousins of ages varying from twenty-five to forty,—Cromwell, Tupper, Livingstone, Wallace and Cobden, all variants of the same

type, except Nelson, who was smarter-looking and seemed more of a man of the world than the others. Then came two families of Podsons, fathers and sons who were in the pottery trade; Mr. Goldney Flake, a member of a wealthy firm of tobacco manufacturers; Charles Hedges, a cheery and shabby-looking member of the legal profession, in whom I discovered an old Wykehamist and a fellow bird-watcher; Mr. Clarence-Perks, a soap-boiler; and others of less importance.

Those morning and evening journeys by their constant repetition made a lasting impression on my memory. I can see Charles Hedges standing at the far end of the platform gazing intently at the adjoining plantation where some bird had attracted him, and on sighting me or Jerry Hook, bustling up to us to announce the arrival of the chiff-chaff or tell us the last bit of village gossip or characteristic remark of a Bullman. On the return journey in the evening, in addition to his scrap-book and manuscripts, he bore numerous parcels, one of which generally consisted, as he confided to us, of a 'bit of fish for Pansy'; and when—as occasionally happened after he had received payment for an article or had been 'egging' with his friends Bob Price and 'old Weg Willows'—he was slightly, very slightly, drunk, he bought large numbers of illustrated papers. He was always cheerful in spite of his impecuniosity and the memory of happier things; he got amusement out of the foibles of his neighbours; and his stories about them were always

good-natured, unlike those of Jerry Hook, which often had a sting in them.

Jerry seemed to have a faculty for discovering the weaknesses of his acquaintances and he took a delight in drawing them out, going out of his way, for instance, to discuss heraldry with Mr. Clarence-Perks, who had recently obtained, at a price, a coat of arms at the Heralds' College, marred, Jerry pointed out to him, by a single defect. 'The arms of a man of your position,' he said, 'are incomplete without supporters'; and I believe he induced his victim to apply for the remedy of this omission. And there were others, rather inoffensive people such as young Mr. Tosher, who had a habit of saying, 'How are you? *Quite well?*' as a greeting, and who seemed to think it funny to say 'muchly' instead of 'much'; and Cox Podson, who had frequent colds in his head and insisted on keeping the carriage windows closed while he breathed infection around him, who irritated Jerry to a point when he became almost rude. It seemed to me that he never said a kind thing or did an unkind one—indeed I heard from the Merthyrs, with whom I occasionally took tea, that he was a good friend to the working men, especially any of them who were in difficulties, and sometimes after his day's work gave up an evening to helping in their entertainments. Though he was ready enough to talk on trivial subjects I found that he was essentially reserved, and it was not until we had been housemates for some months that he gave me his confidence and I saw something of the more

serious side of his nature. Sometimes just before bed-time he would come to my room and talk about books or repeat verses of poetry, waiting with some interest for my comments. Being fond of poetry myself, and not without definite likes and dislikes, I gave my criticism of the verses freely, not knowing that he was the author. The man I had known was a cynic, dissatisfied with the world around him and scornful of his fellow-creatures and himself: the man I discovered was an idealist, living in a world of dreams and finding his chief happiness in their expression.

It must have been a strong impulse that could make him spend his evenings after a laborious day in literary work: it meant overwork, and this no doubt partly accounted for his indifferent health and irritable temper. But there was no alternative: he could not abandon his business life, for he had a mother and sister partly dependent on him for their support, and the relinquishment of the work he had in his heart would have deprived him of his chief interest in life. His father, who was dead, had been a Canon of Wells, where his mother and sister still lived. Mrs. Hook looked like a relict of the late canon. Clara was very cultivated, and had a sharper tongue than you would have expected from a girl with such soft dark eyes. They were all rather nervous in temperament, 'highly strung', as it is called; and, as I found when the ladies were visiting Jerry, though they all seemed to jar each other in small ways they were on very affectionate terms—indeed, though Jerry was

gradually expanding to me, I don't think he had any real friend except his sister. He went nowhere except to Grantry Park and the Merthyrs, and I soon knew the neighbours better than he did. I accepted the invitations they were kind enough to send me, and danced with the Misses Kitley and Podson and Bullman; I joined the golf club, went bird-nesting in the spring with Charles Hedges, and sometimes spent an hour in the evening at the inn among the village people. When the family was at home Jerry and I were frequently at Grantry Park, but I saw little of Mary, who was away at school.

The Falcons were very hospitable to their neighbours, but they had their own friends and house parties; and though most of the resident families—at all events the members of their younger generation—would not have admitted it, they knew that Grantry Park belonged to a different social world to their own. After the Falcons the people of most influence in the district were the Bullmans. The Bullmans! I pause on the name. For me it has a special significance, as might the Plantagenets, or the Cenci, or the Graces. It meant solid worth, domestic virtue, common sense, lack of imagination, contempt of foreigners, respect for the law, parish boundaries. It meant parochial England. There were many families of Bullmans in the neighbourhood, all related, all united by similar tastes, characteristics, and principles. They prided themselves on the regularity of their habits; they arranged their lives to a time-table. This was conspicuous not

only in their work but in their recreations. Rigid lines divided their seasons: on a certain day of the year the younger men got out their bats, the elders their bows and arrows, and on a certain day they oiled them and put them away. Cromwell's habits were almost astronomical in their regularity and periodicity. On Derby Day every year he appeared in a white bowler, which he wore until the end of August. He hired a mowing machine and cut his hay every first week in July, regardless of the condition of the weather; and so invariable were the intervals of two years between the births of his children that it seemed probable that in this important matter also a time-table had been prepared. Cobden had married a lady to whom he had been long attached but who, for some unknown reason, had been slow in reciprocating his affection. He was said to have proposed for her every year for seven years, choosing, I understood from Jerry Hook, the same date every year—he said it was the second Monday in Advent—for the renewal of his addresses; and in the end, like a true Englishman and Bullman who refused to admit defeat, he became victorious. As a family they were models of domestic virtue, and if one of their members was to be regarded as an exception, his lapses were so orderly that they had something of the quality of respectability: Tupper Bullman was a bachelor, and went once a month to London to sow his wild oats.

By some obscure mental process the whole Bullman family seemed to arrive at the same con-

clusions. They did not argue; they made statements. They were Conservative by instinct, and it was probably this conservatism that kept them faithful to the family traditions of Liberalism in politics. And they were intensely patriotic. They were the only people in the neighbourhood who remembered the date of St. George's Day, and on this and other national anniversaries they displayed Union Jacks on their flagpoles. They admired Oliver Cromwell and John Hampden; they were among the most loyal subjects in the kingdom: not a word of criticism of the monarchy would they hear, and though rigid in their standard of morality they were prepared to make special allowances for the indiscretions of princes. On one occasion, when the lapses of a Royal Personage were being commented on and Jerry Hook had been rather caustic, Wilberforce Bullman had expressed the family views by pointing out the exceptional temptations which beset the exalted; and Nelson had added, 'and the high living! Now what can you expect, Hook, from a man who has a woodcock for afternoon tea?'

Most of our other neighbours seemed to be in a state of social, political, and religious evolution. The Clarence-Perkses were soap-boilers, who, Jerry Hook said, had undergone a refining process comparable to that which had been applied to the soap—the old yellow bar having become a scented tablet. The Podsons, he informed me, were Dissenters, and like most Dissenters, virtuous but slightly untruthful. The elders of the family went to the Methodist chapel; the young

ones had joined the Established Church. The aggressive Radicalism of the past generation had become an insipid Liberalism in the present. Mr. Smiles Podson, the most prominent member of his family, was the Liberal member for a division of Mine Ferry. He was a man of the earnest type, with a face at the same time benevolent and self-assertive. Jerry Hook found him a particularly attractive study, and on one occasion at least he won from him a response of deeper revelation than he had hoped for. 'I understand the broad division of parties into people who have possessions and those who have not,' Jerry said innocently; 'I understand those who have nothing being anxious to make those who have shell out, and I can understand the man who, when asked what his politics were, replied: "Got a bit and mean to keep it"; but I cannot understand how the man of substance—men like yourself, Mr. Podson—can belong to a party which is in alliance with those who are attacking property. *Your* interests would seem to be with the Conservative party.'

'My friend,' said Mr. Podson, with a smile, 'I am as you say a man of some property; but *your* party is looking after *my* interests; I am therefore free to look after the interests of those less fortunate'—and Jerry was so taken aback by the answer that he was for once speechless.

Some of my information about my neighbours came from Jerry and was probably a little imaginative, but by the end of the winter I had observed a good deal for myself. 'Now,' said

he one day after we had been discussing them, 'you know the people among whom you have elected to spend the rest of your life.'

'The rest of my life!' I exclaimed. 'What nonsense!'

'If you think,' he replied, 'that you're going to get enough money to buy your property in Ireland, and build up your ruins, and retire from business in ten years or even twenty, you're deluded. It will be slow work even if you show ability and get pushed on. You won't have a chance of getting out before you're fifty. Make up your mind that this is to be your home. The Bullmans and the Kitleys, the Goldney Flakes and the Podsons will be your comrades; from among their daughters you will choose a wife, with whom you will begin your married life in one of the new villas near the station; when your salary increases you will move to a larger house; you will become more and more interested in local affairs; you will have children to educate and your wife will want a motor car, and you will finally give up your dream about re-establishing your family fortunes in Ireland.'

'A very disagreeable and improbable forecast,' I said.

'It ought to be agreeable to you,' he replied. 'If it is not, you have no business to embark on this career. You would make a first-class game-keeper, or a good secretary to a zoological gardens. You might make a good farmer or colonist, but I doubt if you have the trade instinct. If you find you are getting keen, I advise you to stick

to the business; if not, get out of it and find something you can put your heart into. It's perhaps too soon to judge, but I shall watch you with interest, my son, during the next few months.'

Jerry had seen that I was not settling down to the career I had chosen very happily; and yet I had nothing to complain of. In the office I was transferred before long from the shipping to the accounts department, where the training was excellent but the work dull; and even at the most exciting period of the financial year, when the books were being balanced in preparation for the annual profit and loss account, and the beads of perspiration almost continuously bejewelled Delcreedy's nose, I was not stirred.

Outside, the great blast furnaces and steel-works had a fascination of their own, an infernal magnificence, especially on dark winter evenings when the world beyond was dreary, and in the glow of ruddy light, and in the roar and rush of sound, while the molten slag poured out like streams of lava and the bars undulated along the live rolls like fiery serpents, the dark legions of our workmen pursued their titanic tasks. And the wharves where the ships were loading always attracted me. The river was black, its banks were muddy, but those waters were connected with all the seaways of the world, and carried my fancies away from the quays of Mine Ferry to the blue waters and far-off shores to which the ships were bound.

In the midst of all this activity a feeling of

loneliness came over me sometimes. I did not realise until he had gone how much I depended for companionship on Brian. Our parents being dead and our near relations few, we had become almost more than brothers to each other, and except Aunt Margretta there was no one to whom I could give my confidence. About Brian, as the winter months passed, I was beginning to feel some anxiety. I had only had one letter from him since he left, and that was written immediately after his arrival at Durban at the end of September. The Boer War, which broke out in the middle of October, had then seemed imminent, and Brian had written, as I might have expected of him, expressing his sympathy with the cause of a little nation which he believed to be gallantly defending its liberty, and his indignation with what he called the 'libertinism of the Imperial power' which was attacking it. 'Here,' he said, 'is a case where Ireland is trammelled by the Union. If we were independent, Ireland would not fight against the Boers; but in the British Parliament our members are powerless, they are swamped by the majority, and if there is war Ireland will have to remain in alliance with those who are attacking the liberties which she would otherwise defend.' He went on to say that the condition of things in South Africa made it difficult to carry out the mission on which he had gone, and if war did break out their plans would be changed. He was himself just starting on a visit to his father's Dutch friends who lived on the Transvaal border of Natal, and in the event of war he and Michael Byrne would probably go

on to Australia by the first available ship, or perhaps return home. As the months passed without further news I naturally became more anxious, and was not wholly relieved by a message which came to me from Michael Byrne in a letter to Mr. Merthyr telling me not to be alarmed if I did not hear immediately from Brian, who was remaining up country with his friends on the Natal border, and probably found it difficult to get letters through on account of the military occupation.

At Christmas Mary had come home. She was full of excitement about the war. Her brother Eustace, who had been in action and mentioned in despatches, was her hero. She knew the names of the regiments at the front, and was especially enthusiastic about Hart's Brigade and the gallantry of the Irish troops, and about the defence of Ladysmith and the refusal of Sir George White, another Irishman, to surrender. About the silence of Brian, whom she constantly spoke of, she had various impossible explanations—that he had enlisted in one of the Irish regiments or Colonial corps, that he was shut up in Ladysmith, that he had been taken prisoner by the Boers. It never occurred to her that where the British people were united and the Irish regiments distinguishing themselves his sympathies could possibly be with the enemy—had not the war indeed made England and Ireland forget their little differences? Mary was growing up quickly and held definite opinions of her own about many things. It was in her nature to be carried away

by enthusiasms, as I afterwards had further opportunities of seeing, and at the present time her patriotism and her hero-worship of the men fighting was the one in evidence. 'I can't understand you not joining the army,' she said to me. '*You* ought to be a soldier. Hundreds of men who are weak and never rode a horse or had a gun in their hands can do the work in offices.' Rather presumptuous on her part, no doubt, but we had become very good friends, and perhaps it was the high opinion she had of me that made her wish to see me more honourably engaged than in the daily journey to Mine Ferry with the Podsons and the Bullmans and the Clarence-Perkses.

When you are a traveller to unknown lands, even the meaner spots, the cheerless halting-places are not without romance. As a stage the uncongenial place is lighted by the enchantment of your whole journey, though if it were your goal it would be hateful. It was as a stage, a temporary scene of new activities, that I had foolishly pictured my life at Mine Ferry. To see my business career, not as an episode, but, as Jerry Hook had shown it, as a goal, began to cast the shades of the prison-house about me. However, I saw no alternative, and being of a philosophical nature I made the best of it, calling to mind the ultimate reward and the service to my family, and always hoping that good fortune would favour me and curtail my period of servitude.

II

The spring came, and the war in South Africa which had not been expected to last more than a few months had become a struggle which was taxing the strength of the Empire. No one, however, had any doubt as to the issue, and the daily life of England went on much as usual. Of Brian I had heard nothing, nor had I been able to communicate with Michael Byrne, who, I learnt from inquiries I made in Dublin, had not yet returned to Ireland. At Whitsuntide I went home for a short holiday, to find Aunt Margretta greatly disturbed about Brian's silence, and my grandfather not a little concerned, but I had nothing to suggest that would relieve their anxiety. From all our own people at Ballyquin and from any of the neighbours whom I met I received a warm welcome, and though the shortness of my stay was deplored it was understood that, as an important business man engaged on making a rapid fortune and directing large operations, I could not be spared long from my post. I have been slow, perhaps from a feeling of shame, in speaking of Annette. At Christmas we had exchanged letters, and on my return to England I found another from her telling me that she had left the shop and had gone into an insurance office as a clerk in the secretary's department. She hoped that we should some day have a chance of renewing our friendship, and alluded to our 'jolly little adventure in Somersetshire' in a way that made it clear to me that she did not think

of the episode seriously. To me the memory was a delightful one accompanied by a feeling of dissatisfaction with myself, a distrust of the estimate I had formed of the stability of my own character, in realising that I had been able to fall into the captivity of her charms so quickly and so quickly escape. It was a relief to know that she had taken the affair so lightly. I was glad not to be bound, and yet there were times when the memory of her face and figure, of her companionableness, of the sweetness of her manner when love surprised her heart, came back to me so vividly that it appeared as if my emancipation was not complete, and I think it most probable that if I had met her again at this time I should have fallen back into captivity. With a very young man a great deal depends on propinquity: when Clara Hook came to stay with Jerry, though I did not exactly fall in love with her, the brightness of her mind, the magic of her music, the friendliness of her dark eyes helped to banish my dreams of Annette.

The coming of summer made my indoor work more irksome, the surroundings of the office more depressing. The warm sunshine seemed to fall as a reproach rather than as a blessing on the heaps of slag and cinder and the railway banks and waste places where patches of grass still grew and a few weeds struggled into bloom; and in the glow of the sunset the long lines of red brick streets near the works, the public-houses, the Wesleyan chapel, and the black gas cylinders looked more depressing than in the winter rain. The daily journey, the uninspiring

work, the graceless surroundings were becoming wearisome to me; but though I was discontented I stuck to my work, and might have continued to do so until I had established tolerance for it, had it not been for two occurrences. Whenever I think of these I recall the cricket match between Grantry and the Bullman family which was played early in August. It was the evening before that great local event that Jerry Hook and Clara, who was on a visit to him, and I had the conversation which disclosed the possibility of a new career to me; and it was when the match was actually being played that I received the definite tidings of Brian that shook me out of my rut and brought me to a decision.

The Bullmans had an annual festival. Like the Lyttletons and the Graces, they had a cricket eleven in their own family; and during the week of celebration they not only played three matches but held other contests — a half-mile trotting race for cobs, a butter competition, and a show of carnations and vegetables. The most interesting event in the week was the match against Grantry, whose strength was generally augmented for the occasion by one or two cricketing friends of Dick Falcon's, the captain. The Bullmans had a private cricket ground at Grantry House, the residence of the Cromwells, who here entertained the elevens, gave a garden-party to the neighbourhood in the afternoon, and provided a special tent with refreshments for the villagers. Bullmans from a distance came to Grantry for the festival and filled the houses of the local

members of the family. They treated the match with more than their usual seriousness: in competing for the production of the largest vegetable marrow it did not so much matter who won, as it was bound to be a member of the family; but in the cricket match it was the family against the world. For weeks beforehand they practised at the nets, the form of every member of the team was watched by the captain, and Tupper, so Jerry declared, was not allowed to pay his monthly wild-oats visit to London. In the village, too, there was keen interest, and night after night the constitution of the side was discussed at the inn, and the rival claims for inclusion of Lodge the postman or young farmer Vowles or butcher White were contested.

On the evening before the cricket match, while we were at dinner, Jerry asked his sister if I had told her about my ruins and the tower I proposed to restore and live in.

'Oh yes,' she answered, 'he has invited me to come there on a visit.'

'Irishmen always ask you to come and stay with them even if they have nowhere to put you up,' said Jerry; 'but Nick means to have a place. That's why he's working in the business. Now would you say he was fitted for a business career, Clara?'

She took a look at me as if to help her in deciding a question she had not before thought about. 'Do you like it?' she asked me.

'No,' I replied. 'I hate it.'

'So do I,' said Jerry, 'and yet I believe I'm

a good business man. You can't judge of your ability by your tastes. Some time ago I was examined by a phrenologist. The professor was standing on his doorstep in a street in Mine Ferry and begged me as I passed to come in and have an examination. He said it would be a godsend to him as he was hard up and he would do the thing for a bob. I consented, and being, as you know, ambitious as a poet, I was anxious to hear his views as to my qualifications. I was gravely discouraged. '*Ideality?*' he exclaimed, digging his fingers into my skull, 'very small. *Sublimity?* absent. *Imagination?* a minus quantity. *Destructiveness?* large. *Combativeness?* prominent. You, young man, ought to emigrate! you ought to be a rancher. Now, *you've* got an eye to tame an 'orse!'

'It must have almost decided you to go out and join Tom,' Clara laughed. 'Tell Nick' (our friendship had reached the point of using Christian names) 'about the letter you had from him to-day. I believe the life would suit him much better than business.'

Jerry had told me that he had an uncle sheep-farming in New Zealand with whom his younger brother was working. 'Tom's thinking of starting on his own account,' he now informed me, 'and wants a partner. If you don't feel inclined to make your fortune at Mine Ferry it might suit you. I'll show you the letter after dinner.'

'It's a splendid life,' said Clara. 'I should like to go out and live there myself.'

I found it difficult to picture her as I could

have pictured Annette in a primitive settlement assisting in the farm and household work.

'You think you'd like it,' Jerry said to her, 'but you'd be bored to death when you got there. No music, no Browning societies, no cathedral services. My sister, Nick, is devoted to minor canons and precentors.'

'I might as well say because you are surrounded by the Miss Bullmans and Miss Toshers and Miss Stanley Podleys, or whatever their name is, that you were devoted to them,' she retorted.

'That,' said he, 'would be what Mr. Cromwell Bullman calls a *tu quoke*.'

'Oh, the Bullmans,' she laughed.

'They're made of stuff that doesn't take polish,' said Jerry, 'but there's none of the pretentiousness about them that you see in so many of our other neighbours. A solid deal table is a useful and pleasing object, but the polish on cheap modern furniture is displeasing.'

'If only they could hear the things you say about them!' said Clara.

'They do,' I replied. 'The other day in the train young Podson, who has been to some public school, spoke patronisingly of Captain Perril's sons as "grammar school boys", and Jerry remarked, "I always find it more illuminative to know where a boy's grandfather has been at school than where he has been himself. Their grandfather was at Harrow. And yours?" He didn't like it.'

'How they must love you,' remarked Clara.

'On the whole I prefer the fathers who drop their h's to the sons who drop their g's,' said Jerry.

'How do you like your neighbours here?' Clara asked me.

I mentioned Charles Hedges and a few others I found companionable.

'It's a new class to Nick,' said Jerry. 'They don't keep people of this sort in Ireland. They're all poor there, but they're all gentle people with long pedigrees. And they claim a sort of class superiority which is out of date. They look down on trade. Mr. Falcon was the first of his family to soil his hands in commerce and Nick is the second. But they *are* ladies and gentlemen, the sort it takes centuries to breed, who spring from ancestors who were in a position to *give* to those around them, not from those who got all they could out of their superiors by trading on them. We're afraid to use the word "gentleman" now, and to speak of your ancestors is thought snobbish.'

'There's a sort of arrogance about Jerry's point of view,' said Clara. 'I'm ashamed to say I feel it a little myself. We're so satisfied with our superiority.'

'They're all satisfied with themselves,' he answered. 'I wish I could disillusion them.'

'But your ladies and gentlemen—the people you meet at Grantry Park don't please you much more than the others,' Clara objected. 'I have heard you say that there wasn't a single subject worth discussing that you could talk of at one of their house parties.'

'No,' he said. 'You might speak of a popular novel, but not of literature; you might refer to a divorce case, but fancy speaking of love. You might possibly allude to the Church, but you dare not mention God.'

'Of course not,' she laughed.

'It would be impossible,' he continued, 'to make any reference to the great ideals or purpose of life. If you did so you would be laughed at or thought a prig; and your acceptance of the convention shows you how much you really fear or respect the society whose opinion you profess to despise. You have to go among socialists and Labour leaders and Irish rebels to get a hearing on these things; and they are not really devoted to these ideals but are aiming at the reconstitution of the present social conditions for their own benefit.'

'Oh,' cried Clara, 'this is too pessimistic. Who—what *do* you believe in?'

'I believe in goodness,' he replied dryly, 'wherever I see it, and in progress, but what the modern world calls progress is merely going downhill on wheels.'

'I think we ought all to go out to New Zealand and begin a new life,' said Clara, rising; 'and if you'd like to take your chairs into the garden and smoke outside the window I'll play when you're ready.'

While Clara played to us I dreamed, conscious of the beauty of the music while I hardly listened. The life I was leading seemed unreal. At home among the scenes I loved and the people I under-

stood I lived the large life of my surroundings; here I seemed detached from the scenes in which I moved, and I was making myself into some one I did not know. I could not return to Ireland; there was little hope there of earning a living, still less of rebuilding the family fortunes. The prospect of a new life abroad, of escaping from Mine Ferry, of a venture in which I should be working for myself, had attractions. If I pursued my present career there was an expectation of ultimate prosperity, a long way off. If I went away I might succeed and in, perhaps, ten years' time come home well-to-do, or I might lose what little I had. To go was to separate myself for an indefinite time from the few people in the world whom I loved—and how few they were: one brother much younger than myself whom I seldom saw; Aunt Margretta and Brian. To be at the other end of the earth when Brian returned—and in spite of my anxiety I confidently counted on his return—was an unhappy prospect. I was restless and dissatisfied, but my meditations ended in a resolution that until I had definite news of Brian I would remain in England.

Clara had been playing Beethoven and Bach, Jerry's favourite composers. Before leaving the piano, perhaps for my special delectation, she played from memory one or two old Irish airs, and made the comment when she had finished that they had the characteristic of being full of sadness and yet not gloomy, pathetic but not sentimental.

'What a pity,' Jerry said to me, 'that you cannot say the same of the words of your songs.

You're a poetical people and you have no poetry.'

'The best of it is in Irish,' I replied. 'Brian's view is that we have never learned to write poetry in English.'

'Yeats, perhaps,' said Jerry. 'I hardly know another. But most of the words to your beautiful airs are either sentimental or comic. Now that last tune Clara played, I expect it's a thousand years old. Do you know the words?'

I confessed that I only knew it in a modern guise as 'Pat Molloy.'

'Can you remember a verse of it?' he asked.

'I can,' I replied. 'It describes the career of a great many Irishmen—indeed, it is almost my own case. You may judge. The family being numerous and poor, Pat emigrates, going first to England:

I went across to England with me pack upon me back;
The English girls are beautiful—of wine there is no lack;
The English girls are beautiful, their love I can't decline;
The ating and the drinking, too, is plentiful and fine.'

'Splendid,' Jerry laughed. 'A gallant Irishman—*their love I can't decline*; and he's not indifferent to the good living. It's your case exactly.'

'And perhaps I shall end like him,' I said. 'After going on to America and other places he returns:

And now I'm coming home again as poor as I began,
To make my Dad and Mammy glad, and this I know I can.
Me pockets they are empty but me heart is full of joy,
For old Ireland is me country and me name is Pat Molloy.'

'What happier lot could a man ask for?' exclaimed Jerry. 'To have achieved nothing and to be perfectly satisfied with yourself. Isn't that the very soul of Ireland?'

Clara returned to the piano and played 'The Meeting of the Waters' with exquisite feeling. Moore's words to that air may not be worthy of the music, but association has endeared them to those who remember them from the days of childhood:

> There is not in the wide world a valley so sweet
> As that vale in whose bosom the bright waters meet;
> Oh, the last rays of feeling and life must depart
> Ere the bloom of that valley shall fade from my heart.

The words and the music sang in my spirit after Clara had finished playing and had joined us in the garden. They brought back memories of old days at home and of Aunt Isabel and Brian, memories that were happy and yet touched with sadness as are all pleasant memories. Perhaps my silence, perhaps something I had said revealed my mood, my feeling of loneliness, to Clara, for while we were sitting there she laid her hand on mine for a moment. The gesture was without a suspicion of coquetry, it was spontaneously sympathetic—a touch that spoke of understanding and comradeship, a trifling thing in itself, but just one of those things one cannot forget.

The cricket match next day against the Bullmans was memorable not only to me on account of a particular incident, but to the whole neighbourhood by reason of its exciting finish. If in

Ireland we have a keener sense of sport than is found in England, and are made aware of how widespread is this instinct when we find every one leaving his work when hounds are hunting in the neighbourhood, or taking a holiday if there is a point-to-point meeting within ten miles, we are behind England in games; and it is a national loss that we do not play cricket, the greatest of all games. Whether it be a test match at Lord's or at the Melbourne Oval, or one between village urchins on a bumpy green with a pathway running between the wickets, it is an inspiriting and honourable contest—one of the things that justifies the ways of man to God; and though I would not go so far as to approve of the popularity it has attained in some of the South Sea islands, where they sometimes play a hundred a side and the match may last for three weeks, I believe that no time is so well spent or has done so much for the youth of England and Australia as this game of cricket.

The Bullmans had a strong and reliable side. There was Wallace, the captain, a sturdy veteran; Norval, who played occasionally for the county; Livingstone, who might have done so if his business conscience had allowed him; and some promising youngsters. In the village team Gratwick the schoolmaster was something of a cricket genius, Guffin a good fast bowler, Dick Falcon a slashing hitter, and one of the Tosher boys was in the Rugby eleven.

Dick Falcon won the toss, and the wicket being good we went in first. The morning's

play had no special interest. We made 112, and at lunch time the best six Bullman wickets had fallen for 60. As it seemed certain they would be behind on the first innings, on which the match would be decided unless there was time to play out a second, the advantage was clearly with us. The Bullmans fully realised the position: at lunch they were grave and abstemious in contrast to their guests, and immediately afterwards Wallace, the captain, called Norval apart for a council of war while the rest of the team stood near awaiting instructions; 'Our Wall and Norval having a cantata together,' as one of them was heard to observe. They were threshing the situation out and deciding on their tactics while our jolly captain was enjoying his pipe, quite satisfied to leave his men to do their best when the time came.

Before the resumption of play the field had become thronged with the village people, and the guests from the neighbourhood had begun to arrive and fill the rows of chairs and garden seats on the grass terrace overlooking the ground. The Bullmans had their own colours, which all their ladies wore, the Union Jack was flying on the flag-pole on the lawn, the day which had been dull began to brighten ('Fair Phœbe is trying to show her face,' Cromwell observed as the sun came out), and the whole scene was a very gay one.

The Bullmans' first innings was completed for 82, forty runs behind ours. At half-past three, with three hours left for play, the second innings began. Gratwick the schoolmaster, and

Chelvey, the landlord of the Angel, went in first. Chelvey was a village Kellaway, the most inertial batsman I have ever seen, a man who had never scored more than seven, and had then occupied an hour in the performance. It is amazing how hard it is to hit a wicket if a big man stands in front of it with a bat which he hardly moves, and the Bullmans, to whom time was now everything, must have found his defence very exasperating. Gratwick was playing good cricket, the result of the match seemed beyond question, and we sat on the terrace as the time passed without any feeling of anxiety about our own contributions to the score. All the invited guests had arrived, Mrs. Falcon with some of her house party and the Duchess of Bedminster, whose son Jimmy B'loke was playing, among them. George Pomfrey was speedily in attendance on the Duchess, his face slightly flushed by the exhilaration of her society. Mr. Goldney Flake hovered near, anxious also to pay his respects to her Grace, but debarred by the presence of Pomfrey; so we gathered from Charles Hedges, who, buoyant with the excellent brown sherry he had been drinking, came up to tell us that Mr. Flake, who had quarrelled with Pomfrey, had been trying to get a legal opinion from him for nothing. It seemed that Pomfrey had undertaken to get some young pheasants for the shoot in which they were partners and had charged the partnership seven and sixpence each for them; but Flake subsequently heard that he had bought them for five shillings. He was anxious to know whether he

had a legal claim for his share of the difference or if Pomfrey could defend the extra half-crown as a buying commission.

'I always said old George would have him,' Dick Falcon laughed. 'Oh, I say, where's my bat? They've got old Chelvey. I'm in.'

Chelvey had at last fallen. They had tried him with long hops and tempted him with full pitches, they had bowled at his head, they had crowded round his wicket while they invited him with half-volleys. He had been wounded all over his body but had not budged. Finally he had touched a fast ball into the hands of long slip, and, as the report of the match in the *Mine Ferry Chronicle* put it, 'thus forfeited his position between the creases'. The great stand of the innings was over. Mr. Cromwell Bullman, who was given to classical allusion, remarked with a sigh of relief that we had lost our Ash*heels*, apparently referring to Achilles and his insensibility to wounds, and perhaps influenced in his pronunciation of the name by a recollection of the hero's vulnerable spot. A new gleam of hope shone before the Bullmans, and they renewed their uphill fight with unabated vigour.

I see by a newspaper cutting which I preserved in my diary that our innings closed for a total of 75 runs, which left the Bullmans one hundred and ten behind with only an hour and twenty minutes in which to get them. For them this was a particularly difficult task, for, with the exception of Norval who was a bold hitter, they were cautious and deliberate in their play, and they

were now called upon to adopt a procedure contrary to their habits, almost against their principles. To force the game was, however, their only chance of a win, and it was soon evident that this was their intention. Wallace and Norval went in first. Norval began hitting at once with all the confidence of a man who had got the measure of the bowling. He was a sport in the family, inclined to be unpunctual at the office and adventurous in his bets, and was looked upon by his relatives with a little disapproval; but to-day he became their hero and did service which I hope was remembered in his favour when, as I have since heard, his conduct fell short of the high standard of respectability which the Bullmans kept before them. Wallace was cautious for a few overs and then scored rapidly; the runs were coming at the necessary rate, about three in two minutes; the partnership had lasted nearly half an hour, and forty-eight runs had been put on before he was caught at the wicket. Livingstone, the thoroughly reliable man on their side, followed. He was the solemnest and most deliberate member of the Bullman family, and his cricket was like himself. He played now with no modification of his usual style: he began with extreme caution, he could not be tempted to hit by half-volleys, he took no risks, he refused a short run for which Norval, anxious to get the bowling, called him. Maiden overs followed each other; they were getting behind their time-table; the score was 60, fifty runs more needed and only thirty-five minutes remaining. At the end of

the next over, Wallace, who was sitting with the other members of the team on the terrace with his watch in his hand, so Jerry afterwards told us, went out and spoke a word to Livingstone, the purport of which became immediately apparent: he had been given instructions to hit at everything and score or get out. His cricket had been correct, and to be penalised by his very virtue must have been very painful to Livingstone, who always counted on his rectitude meeting with a fitting reward. It was as if, being a teetotaller, he had been ordered to get drunk, to be untrue to himself, but he could not disobey his captain's orders, and one more over saw the end of his innings. Nelson, the next man, with his pads and gloves on was already half-way to the wicket when Livingstone left, so that not a moment of the precious time should be lost. There were forty-four runs to make and half an hour for the job. Everything now depended on Norval, who continued to play with the utmost confidence. From Mr. Nimble, our slow bowler, breaking to the off with three-quarters of the field on the off side; from Guffin, our fast bowler, pitching his deliveries short with four men in the slips, he scored with equal success. The Bullman clan, almost awed by the seriousness of the occasion, had been silent until now, but at last their excitement was uncontrollable. Every single run was applauded; the men were standing up; the ladies were cheering as vigorously as the men. I had been bowling earlier in the innings without success; Dick Falcon now put me on again, and

in the first over I got Nelson's wicket, Bunyan taking his place. There were twenty minutes left for play and thirty runs to win.

And now occurred the episode which stamped the match on my memory. Dick Falcon was a good sportsman, and hurried his field to their places at the end of the overs as vigorously as though he had been trying to save time instead of gain it—a proceeding which by no means pleased the onlookers from the village, judged by repeated cries of 'Take your time', 'They wouldn't hurry theirselves', and the like, for, as with the British public generally, though they approved of fair play, they had no patience with chivalry.

Dick Falcon had just tossed me the ball, and I was coming from my place at cover point when I heard a voice calling my name, and became aware of a young lady brilliantly attired tripping across the field to my side.

'Ah, Mr. Nicholas!' she cried; 'at last I have found you.'

'Trenta Byrne!' I exclaimed in amazement.

'Yes,' she laughed gaily. 'What a surprise, is it not? I spring before you out of the ground like one of your fairies, but really I come by the train from Mine Ferry—oof! what a place!—where my father is waiting to see you at the house of our friend the Frau Merthyr. There is news of Brian.'

At the name of Brian I forgot the match, but in a few moments was reminded of it by impatient calls of 'Time', 'Play', from the ranks of the Bullmans, and in answer to a call from Dick

Falcon, who was striding towards me, I chucked him the ball, and saying I would be back in a minute, led Trenta towards the lawn. Though she knew nothing about cricket I believe she was well aware that her appearance in the field had created a little sensation and that she thoroughly enjoyed it. I was excited by the prospect of news of Brian and at once questioned her eagerly, but she was mysterious and full of importance.

'He is still in South Africa. My father saw him before he left; he needs help,' she said. 'There is much to tell, but it cannot be here. A whisper might be heard.'

My anxiety about Brian had perhaps been greater than I had realised, and, whatever Trenta's mysterious news about him might be, the knowledge that he was alive and well gave me intense relief, followed by an exhilaration that asked for an immediate outlet. I wanted to be back in the field bowling my hardest at the Bullmans; and perhaps too, now that my mind was relieved and I was alive to my surroundings, I was anxious to redeem a rather ridiculous situation. We had reached the lawn, and in spite of the exciting position of the match the eyes of nearly all the ladies were turned towards us—even the members of the Bullman team, sitting side by side with their watches in their hands, looked up as we drew near, and I heard one of them remark 'Extry-ordinary'. Trenta indeed, not only by reason of her remarkable beauty but by the daring brightness of colour in her attire, was a very noticeable figure. I think Clara Hook, who

had the quickest of understandings, must have perceived that I was in difficulties, for she came towards us as we approached. I seized the opportunity and introduced Trenta with a word about their both being musicians, and promising to return in a quarter of an hour, ran back to the field without waiting for the end of the over.

A few grins greeted my return; Charles Hedges winked at me violently, and Dick Falcon sent me to my place in the field with a word that he dared not put me on to bowl after my assignation lest I should bowl wides. The church clock chimed the quarter; the umpires looked at their watches and agreed as to the time: there were fifteen minutes left for play and twenty runs to make. Bunyan was caught a few minutes later and Tupper came in. The Bullman hopes now depended on Norval getting the bowling. Tupper, after a hairbreadth escape, survived the three remaining balls of the over, and in the next over Norval made two boundary hits, but found no chance before the end of getting across to the other wicket, so Tupper had again to face the bowling. A lucky leg bye brought Norval again to the front, and six more runs were added to the score. There were five runs required to win, the last over had come—indeed the half-hour struck as it began—and Tupper had to face the attack. Dick Falcon kept on Guffin, his fast bowler, with instructions to keep his deliveries short, and for safety he gave him a long-stop. The first ball, pitched short, rose quickly, and was not taken by the wicket-keeper, and Norval, who

was already a third of the way down the pitch, called the run. The ball was returned smartly enough to the wicket-keeper, but Norval was there before it and Tupper reached his end in safety. Then Norval rolled up his shirt-sleeves until his arms were bare above the biceps. With the next ball short and fast he could do nothing; from the third he could have secured a single, but of course did not run. There were two balls of the over left. To the first of these he ran out perhaps three yards and made a half-volley of it, hitting it away to the boundary on the off side. The ball was going straight to the hands of Butcher White, who was close to the boundary hedge. He misjudged it a little, running in and then backing. The ball went through his hands, struck his body and rebounded. The boundary was saved, but the ball fell in rather long grass near the hedge. White lost sight of it for a moment, and before he had found and returned it five runs had been scored and the Bullmans had won the match.

If Trenta had known what had befallen Brian I do not think she could have kept silent about it. On the journey to Mine Ferry she was talkative on other subjects, full of her own recent adventures, her visit to her relatives in the Austrian Tyrol, the musical training she still had to go through before her debut, a concert at which she had been allowed by her master to sing in Vienna, where members of the Imperial family were present, and the wonderful success she had

attained. 'But I will come back to Ireland,' she said. 'I will give Ireland my voice; I will call her to strike for her freedom.' There was no limit to her vainglory. And then she became contemptuous about England, and spoke of the hatred and scorn which was felt on the Continent for the great empire which was crushing the independence of the Boers. 'This country of bourgeois,' she exclaimed, 'that hires its army from the gutters to fight for it, when the young men who should be soldiers play at ball as here, I have seen this to-day, and you among them, Mr. Nicholas—it is incredible! Do I offend you?'

I laughed. She was a creature with whom one could not argue.

'And why have we no army in Ireland?' she continued. 'Because we are not allowed. We cannot raise volunteers. Our masters do not trust us and will not permit it. And you submit to your masters and play ball with them. Brian would not do so.'

Half an hour later, walking in the little garden at the back of the Merthyrs' house, I heard from Michael Byrne the tidings of Brian which he had come to Mine Ferry to tell me. The purport of the story which he related was briefly this: Brian had been staying with his father's Dutch friends on the Transvaal border of Natal when the war broke out. Every male of the family, father and three sons, had been called to the ranks of the Boer army. Brian had joined them. He had been in the engagements on the Tugela and on Spion Kop, and in the last stage of the

relief of Ladysmith he had been taken prisoner and was now in a prison camp near Durban.

Though I knew Brian's sympathy with the cause of the Boers I had never expected that he would have gone to the length of fighting on their side. My own sympathies as an Irishman were on the Nationalist side, but I had been brought up in the family tradition of loyalty to the throne. I regarded the bonds between England and Ireland as stronger than the hostilities. We had friends and relations in both countries, and Brian's desperate step gave me a painful shock; but in a moment I knew that it had put no barrier between me and my friend. Though I deplored his decision I understood it. He had never owned allegiance to the country against which he had fought; he had been true to his own principles. Michael Byrne said that as soon as the war broke out he knew that Brian's decision was inevitable. Now his concern was for his safety, and he pointed out to me the particular danger in which he stood. If he had been a burgher he would be treated as an ordinary prisoner of war, but if it were known that he was a British subject he might be shot as a rebel. Michael Byrne had not been able to communicate with him in the prison camp. He feared that at the end of the war, on the return of the prisoners, Brian might have a difficulty about getting home and be liable to arrest on his return if he were identified. He would need money and help. He thought it would be wisest for him not to return immediately to Ireland but to go for

awhile to some other country. He himself, being blind and broken in health, could do nothing; he had come to take counsel with me as the one person he knew whose friendship for Brian he could rely upon.

From our talk that evening no plan of action emerged, but I promised to see him again next day. I went back to Grantry on foot, and gradually as I walked along the dark roads my thoughts took a definite shape. I realised that Brian's life was in peril and that he would need a friend at hand to help him when the time came. The prospect of remaining where I was, of going through my daily routine while his fate was in the balance, was unendurable. I might be able to do nothing to help him, but I felt bound to make an attempt. Before I went to bed that night I had decided to go to South Africa and await his release. After that I would have to be guided by circumstances, but I had in view a plan for his accompanying me to New Zealand and remaining with me there until he could return to Ireland without danger. In the meantime I would ask Jerry Hook to tell his brother that there was a possibility of my coming out to join him. It was a somewhat wild scheme, but I chose it with deliberation. It was no chivalrous act, no sacrifice of my prospects to friendship, for the life I had been leading had become so distasteful to me that I was ready to welcome an excuse for abandoning it, and my heart now leapt up at the prospect. The chance of serving my friend had given me a clear call

which I could not but answer, and the decision changed the whole course of my life. The safe road to fortune on which I had been plodding was left behind; the great world, the unknown way with all its difficulties, all its chances, was before me, and my spirit was uplifted by the prospect.

CHAPTER VII

A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

A MONTH after I had received the tidings about Brian I was looking out on blue seas from the deck of a sailing-ship a thousand miles from home.

A voyage on a sailing-ship and one on a modern liner are as different as a journey on foot by mountain pathways and the same journey in a railway train. What you lose in comfort and speed you gain in wonder and beauty; nay, on a sailing-ship you will find a comfort also that more than compensates for some buffetings. If your meals are fewer and plainer and you must go without the conveniences of a hotel, your decks are not crowded with noisy people, there is no rude band to desecrate the silence of the ocean, and instead of the vibration of the engines you feel the rhythm of the seas. But the real joy of sailing is your close touch with the elements —your contest or alliance with the winds and waters. You have no time-table, no measured track between port and port; but the storm outsailed and the long day's run before a fair wind

give you a pride in your ship that you can never have for a liner, though she may provide you with a Turkish bath and have a top deck sixty feet above the sea-level.

Our ship was a four-masted barque, bound for Natal, a cargo ship that carried about twenty passengers. The decks ran flush between the forecastle and the poop where we were quartered, but the whole ship belonged to us, even to the rigging for those who had the courage to go aloft. My fellow-passengers were of different classes, but no conventional barriers stand between shipmates with a common journey and a common home, and before many weeks we were as intimate as members of one family.

The last sight of our island shores was on a windy autumn twilight, as the grey-green sea grew dark and the lights shone out along the coast. For the first fortnight we had head winds from the south-west, and then met the end of a north-westerly gale and ran across it under fore and main lower topsails and fore staysail. Then, with the abating of the gale, mainsails and foresails were set until we reached the pleasant latitudes of the north-east trades and ran before them southward, a towering radiance of white canvas on the dark blue sea—skysails and studdingsails, every sail the ship could carry, spread to hold that constant wind. And forgive me if in speaking of it I seem to air the little knowledge I acquired of a ship's equipment. 'Tops'ls and halyards and braces'! The words bring back to me with a thrill the

great moving seas and the sailors hauling on the ropes, their voices and the notes of the chantey blown away on the wind. 'Stu'ns'ls'! The word is a charm to show me the glittering plains of the ocean and a magic ship dipping along through summer seas. Then came the days when we lay becalmed in Equatorial zones before we found the south-east trades—long days of idle drifting and nights of silence. Then indeed we seemed remote from the world, and there was a mystery in the lonely waters and the deep starlit skies and the dark ship and the shadowy figures on the decks; and when one of a group of sailors on the forecastle-head played some familiar tune on a concertina the sound was no intrusion but gave a sweet and homely significance to the unknown way.

In the long hours of idleness on that voyage I did a good deal of dreaming and remembering, and the sense of separation, the thought of the years that might intervene before I saw the familiar scenes again, brought me some spells of home-sickness. My farewell visit to Ballyquin left a sadness in my heart. I had not expected that my departure would have been so keenly felt. My grandfather was evidently disappointed at my abandonment of the only way that had seemed possible for the restoration of the family fortunes. He was very angry when I told him of my decision, but, when I left, his farewell was almost affectionate. 'Perhaps you'll get on out there and come back and save the place yet,' he said; 'but you must not be too long about it. You

must not disappear like Brian. What do you think's happened to him?' It was the question every one was asking, and which I had answered to no one but Aunt Margretta.

We were seated at the dinner-table and were drinking our second glasses of punch during this conversation. With the first my grandfather had proposed my health, and after this Aunt Margretta had left the room in tears. Uncle de Courcy, contrary to custom, was allowed to remain on this occasion. He sat silent with the look of a dog anxious to show comradeship with superior intelligences. 'Was I ever guilty of giving you boys advice on conduct?' said my grandfather. 'No, 'tis worthless; and the experience of one man is as much use to another as a chart of the Mediterranean is in the North Sea. But I may never see you again, Nick, and I have just this to put to you. I don't say life is not worth living, it may be for all I know, but I declare to God the life *I* lived was not worth living. I took what came and did what it pleased me to do without giving a damn for the price I paid or made others pay for my pleasure. And now I know that what I got wasn't worth having. I believe that even a bun-fed Methodist, who does the stupid things he thinks right, gets more out of life than I did. If I were you I'd try the opposite way to mine,—the experiment might be worth making.' And then, as if ashamed of having given virtuous counsel, he turned angrily to Uncle de Courcy. 'Look at that fellow there,' he said, 'who might have married Jane Crowe and saved the fortunes

of the family. And laughing, are you, sir? Begad, if 'twasn't Nick's last night here I'd put a stick across you.' His third tumbler of punch was doing its work. I was drinking more than usual myself. He had arrived at the stage of intoxication productive of egoistical speech, and asserted that he might have been famous as a poet, painter, or musician if he had not been condemned to live among yokels. He then recited some passages from the *Iliad*, and declaimed the invective of Achilles with a finger pointed at Uncle de Courcy, who had fallen asleep in his chair, and did not awake until I called him to assist in putting the old gentleman to bed.

I went round to see most of my old friends before I left. I should not have bidden them farewell with so light a heart if I had known how long a time it would be before I was to see them again,—three or four years at the outside, not ten, was the period I had in mind. I made a final inspection of my tower with John Nihil the stonemason, to whom I gave charge of the buildings, with instructions to do any repairs from time to time that might be needed to prevent them falling into further ruin, and for the hundredth time we discussed the plans of restoration which were to make some of the rooms habitable when I should have the necessary money. John's hatred of England was unabated. ' 'Tis well for you to be out of that country,' said he, ' but 'tis in Ireland you should be staying, and not roaming the world. And Master Brian gone from us and all the pick of our young men and girls driven out. They're

bleeding the life out of us and 'tis their blood must pay for it. What's the good of talk in Parliament? The only argument they'll listen to will be mixed with blood—and that's what Mr. Brian knows. What was he doing in South Africa I'll ask you? '

I shook my head.

' I can tell you where he was, then,' said John. ' He was fighting in Africa in the cause of freedom *agin England*, and please God he'll be back in Ireland fighting in the same cause.'

' Why? Did you hear of him? ' I asked, much startled at his words.

' I did not,' he replied, ' but I know where he went, *and we know our man.*'

I received kind words and blessings on every side, but the farewell speech I liked best and treasured for many years was that of Mary Casey, our old coachman's wife. ' And that God may watch over you, Master Nick,' she said, ' and that you may come back again to Ireland to find all that you went away to look for.'

Of the other friends to whom my thoughts returned Jerry Hook and Clara stood foremost. With both of them I felt that I had made a true bond of comradeship, and with Clara there was a touch of affection which I believe, on my side at all events, would have warmed into a stronger feeling if we had continued to see each other. But I was not in love with her then: indeed I believe I was still in a vague way in love with Annette. My conduct would seem to justify this belief, for why otherwise should I suddenly on the eve of my

departure have made up my mind to see her? What would have happened if she had been at home, heaven knows, but when I called at the little suburban villa in Birmingham where her family lived I found that she was away working in an office in Edinburgh, and my sailing date did not allow me time for further pursuit. I made the acquaintance of her parents and had tea with them and the younger daughter, a delicate-looking and rather pretty girl. Mr. Williamson was a handsome man with a beard and the frame of a viking, blunt in speech, cheery in manner. He told me that his father was a farmer in Antrim, and that he had begun life himself as a fitter; he was now a manager and was thinking of starting a little works on his own account. He was very proud of Annette, who he said had a great head for business. Mrs. Williamson was a pleasant-looking woman, obviously a lady, and perhaps a little over-anxious that I should know that she belonged to one of our old Munster families. She asked me one or two questions which showed me that Annette had said very little about our friendship, and I think she was puzzled about the reason of my visit. I said good-bye to them, somewhat disappointed at the futility of my expedition, and yet feeling a little relieved at the preservation of my freedom. Afterwards, in solitary hours at sea, the thought that I should probably never see Annette again brought with it a definite pang of regret.

But the real sadness of farewell is only felt by those whose home is left behind them and who

know they will return no more. Among my fellow-travellers were some of these; and I shall not forget the look on the face of an elderly Scotch farmer, who was emigrating with his family, as the shores of the old world grew dim in the distance on the grey September evening when our voyage began. For me the separation from all that I knew and loved was no tragedy. Unknown adventures awaited me beyond the horizon, my life was only beginning, and if a tear once rose to my eyes at the thought of Aunt Margretta struggling to keep things going at Ballyquin, or of Uncle de Courcy sitting alone in his workshop, it sprung from sentiment, not pain. The call of the unknown beyond me was stronger than that of the homeland left behind.

Day after day we voyaged in those far seas, no shore, no sail in sight on our track; and night after night new vistas into the infinite heavens spread above us, great deeps beyond the radiance of the milky way and the magic isles of the Magellan clouds; and our ship alone on the waters seemed a little world in itself sailing among the stars.

Through all that voyage we touched no land. Fifty days after we left England in the last light of a golden evening our tug took us over the bar to our anchorage in the bay of Durban. It was too late to go ashore, and we spent the night on board, lying in the still waters of the haven. In the dark we saw the lagoon surrounded by hills and the glowing shore lights half hidden by trees. Far away we heard the muffled boom of the great

ocean breakers, and near us the soft sounds of the splash of oars or the gentle ripple of the current under the bows of the anchored ship. Strange fragrance of unknown flowers reached us in little drifts of warm air from the shore, and strange stars rose above the horizon of the inland hills. There to the northward lay vast unknown lands and lonely forests and lakes and rivers that few had seen or explored. Africa! the very name was a spell; the mystery and wonder of it encompassed me. Until to-morrow! Then I should see a town and civilised life and quays laden with military stores and British soldiers marching through the streets.

The voyage was over, but my task, which during the journey I had thought of vaguely and romantically, was only beginning. I was prepared to remain in South Africa until the end of the war brought Brian's release, hoping then to get him to accompany me to New Zealand and remain abroad until it seemed safe for him to return without incurring the danger of arrest. These plans, vaguely conceived when I was at a distance, began to present formidable difficulties now that the time had come for putting them into practice. When I awoke the morning after our arrival and saw the quays guarded by sentries, when I realised that the country was under martial law and my own movements the subject of scrutiny, I perceived how difficult a task lay before me, and later in the day an incident occurred which showed me the terrible significance of the choice Brian had made in standing on the side

of the Queen's enemies. I was sitting in the evening on the verandah of the Royal Hotel looking out on the strange scene before me. Wagons with long teams of bullocks, sometimes as many as twenty in number, were slowly labouring along the street; rickshaws pulled by Kaffir boys, fantastically ribboned and horned, glided past; British soldiers in uniform, turbaned Indian coolies, black stalwart Zulus mingled among the passers-by; while the flicker of remote lightning played on the twilight sky above the Berea, a thousand crickets chirped in the grass, and the wind was rustling in the date palms. Here, smoking a meditative pipe, I was greeted by a man in uniform whom I recognised as a Winchester schoolfellow. In the course of our conversation he spoke of my cousin Eustace Falcon, also his schoolfellow, and startled me by the news that he had been killed. It was this more than anything else that brought home to me the barrier Brian had raised between himself and his family. Among Irish Republicans, perhaps among a few cosmopolitan idealists, his conduct might be approved or understood, but in the class to which he belonged he would never be forgiven.

Events had occurred which removed my suspense and made my plans unnecessary. Michael Byrne had given me an introduction to a Swiss doctor in Durban who had been a friend of Brian's father, and on visiting him next day I heard that the internment camp was being broken up and the prisoners sent to Ceylon, the embarkation having been arranged to take place immediately.

We discussed the possibilities of my getting an interview with Brian without arousing suspicion, and decided that the risk involved by my making an application to the military authorities would be too great and that my safest way of communicating with him would be to write him a letter, which the doctor, who had permission to pay him a farewell visit, would deliver. I did, however, succeed in getting a brief interview on the morning of the embarkation. I went down to the quay at the Point, on the chance of a word with him, and was standing in a little crowd of people, some of them friends of the prisoners, when the first detachment arrived. They were men of all ages, battered and dishevelled, their clothes ragged and motley, and all of them with beards. At first I did not discover Brian, and when I did recognise the face I loved so well, thin, worn, and bearded, a sudden pang of pain shot through my heart. He saw me almost at the same moment and smiled, lifting his hand with the forefinger extended in a way we had of greeting each other. There was some delay in the arrival of the other detachments, and in the interval the prisoners walked about the quay and were allowed to talk to their friends. Our doctor took me to Brian, and as a precaution, lest we should be observed, went through the formality of introduction.

In our greeting there was a touch of embarrassment or shyness, due, I think, to strong emotion which neither of us wished to show. Two men, warm friends and fellow-countrymen, could hardly have met in more tragic surroundings, and we

both tried to minimise the significance. There was something, too, which was incongruous to a dramatic situation in the established familiarity of our relationship; indeed our feelings took refuge under a laugh.

'If I could have borrowed a razor I'd have shaved for the occasion,' Brian said. 'I expect you hardly knew me.'

'You got my letter. What do you think of my plan?' I asked, getting to business at once lest our time should be cut short. 'I mean coming out to New Zealand when you are free.'

'I want to know what you are doing here. This is not the way to New Zealand,' he said.

I told him I had got sick of my business career, and of my New Zealand project, and that, having heard from Michael Byrne of his imprisonment and the danger of his position, I had travelled this way on the chance of seeing him and being some use.

His face flushed. 'I believe you chucked the business on my account,' he said.

'No,' I told him, 'it just turned the scale. Now as to New Zealand?'

'They will send us back here,' he replied. 'And in any case I would come back before going anywhere else. Look at those poor fellows.' He pointed to the disconsolate-looking prisoners who were standing about on the quay. 'My father's old friend, the farmer I told you about, is among them. Two of his sons were killed, one is still out fighting. I expect his farm is burned. I must return with him and do what

I can for him. Was there ever such a wicked and unchivalrous war?'

I did not approve of this war, but I was not saying so. As an Irishman I was a citizen of the British Empire. Brian did not so consider himself.

'Do you blame me for what I have done—for standing on the side of freedom against the greatest injustice England ever attempted? As an Irishman claiming freedom for Ireland, how could I do otherwise?' His look was defiant and his eyes blazed, but I don't think he expected me to condemn his conduct.

'I understand all right,' I replied.

'Yes,' he said quietly, 'if you had not understood you would not have been here. No, I don't think I can come to New Zealand. When I leave South Africa I must go home. Ireland is calling me all the time.'

'There will be danger. What you have done is sure to come out if you go into public life. You would have to get the Queen's pardon.'

'Pardon be damned,' he said angrily. 'You don't ask pardon for doing what you know to be right. If you tried to help an old man to keep off an angry dog you wouldn't ask pardon of the dog's owner. The people who want pardon are those who could have prevented this war,—God's pardon, not the poor old Queen's.'

I suggested that not a dog attacking an old man, but a lion defending its cubs, was the illustration used by the English side, almost forgetting our surroundings for the moment

and falling into my old argumentative manner with him; and both of us perceiving this we laughed. The appearance of a sentry warned us that our talk was not judicious and we changed the subject.

'I'm glad you're out of that business,' he said; 'it would have made you half an Englishman. But how could you leave Ireland? New Zealand is a long way off.'

'It is,' I replied rather sadly, 'but it gives me a chance. If I get on and make money I'll come back and keep the old place going. I suppose I really ought to have stayed in the business. Anyhow I've made my decision. I must go on.'

'Tell me something about them at home,' he asked. 'Do they think I'm dead or what?'

I told him that Aunt Margretta knew what had happened and he need have no fear of his conduct having made any barrier between them. For the others, I said, some story of his absence would have to be invented. I spoke also of Michael Byrne and Mary Falcon, but spared him the distress of telling him that Eustace had been killed. Knowing the help that money might be to him I had put all the cash I had with me in an envelope, and, on my assurance that I could get all I wanted for myself through our friend the doctor, he accepted it.

'It may help me to get a few comforts for some of those poor chaps,' he said, referring to his fellow-prisoners.

I urged him again to consider the wisdom of joining me in New Zealand if only for a short

time before venturing to return to Ireland, and gave him my address at the Hooks' station. The order to the prisoners to fall in came suddenly and our farewells were brief.

'By God, Nick,' he said, as we grasped hands, 'you're a good friend. Seeing you has put new hope into me.' He looked almost happy though there were tears in his eyes.

I remember feeling very desolate as I watched his ship cross the bar and move away on her north-easterly course until she was almost lost in the great blue expanse of the Indian Ocean. I then wished I had not left home and half thought of returning to take up any job I could find in the old country; but the mood passed, and, being young and vigorous, the call of the unknown, the prospect of adventure, rekindled my spirits. My ship was to sail for Sydney in two days, and there was something pleasant and homely in the thought of seeing my old fellow-travellers.

For the next two days until we embarked I wandered through strange enchanted scenes, through tangled bush alight with the red blossom of the flamboyant and the white stars of the amatiangoola and threaded with blue chains of convolvulus; alive with the very birds of fairy-land,—honey-suckers and lories, canaries, roy-becks and bluebirds, flashing gold and rose-red and azure in their primeval sanctuary. The beautiful snake that slid across my path was a green mamba; large lizards shot round the tree-trunks. I saw chameleons and monkeys and

tortoises,—creatures that had made the study of natural history the greatest romance of my boyhood. And the open space between the bush and the blue lagoon, which they call the bay, was filled with flowers,—sweet-scented four o'clocks over which great green and lemon-coloured butterflies were hovering, and trees of sea hibiscus and syringa among which the pink-winged locusts skimmed with short flights like flying fish. Away over the other side the bush spread along an immeasurable strand, where the Indian Ocean rolled the great breakers whose boom, even in calm weather, could be heard far inland day and night. The mystery of Africa, which had touched my spirit on the night of my arrival, had not been dispelled by what I had seen in my exploration, and it remained with my last view of its shores when we were away at sea and the twilight sky was piled with great thunder cumulus, and over the distant wooded hills of Natal to the west the lightning played on clouds still touched with the colours of the sunset.

Of my voyage to New Zealand and of my fortunes during the years of absence from home it is not my purpose to tell here. My story is not of myself but of those I had left behind, or if it is also of myself it is only so in my relations with them.

The period of absence I had contemplated was long extended; for when at the end of four fairly prosperous years on our sheep station I was arranging to pay a visit home, the great

drought followed by a bad winter hit us so hard that I was unable to afford the journey; and again, two years later, when I had actually reached San Francisco on my homeward voyage, I was called back by the dangerous illness of my partner. In the end we achieved a good measure of success after much hard work, and I sold my share in the station and returned to the country that had never ceased to call to me. But it was ten years from the time I set out on my youthful voyage of adventure when I set out homeward on my voyage of re-discovery.

CHAPTER VIII

A VOYAGE OF RE-DISCOVERY

How shall I make you feel that ten years had passed between the windy September evening when I watched the lights coming out on the darkening English coasts as I sailed away on my voyage of adventure, and the morning when I went on board the P. & O. steamer at Sydney bound for home? We meet people after a lapse of time and see the same persons and yet not the same; we note the change, but know not the gradations, hardly realising that they also have *been with themselves* all the time; and it is thus that I myself, like my reader, am to meet my old friends again. I had of course heard news of them all, just what we get in letters, and something of this I must tell you, but I will make no attempt to epitomise those years, for summaries are dull things and unenlightening.

Which is the greater joy,—the setting out in search of the unknown on the paths of hope and adventure, or the coming back after an absence to the known and the loved? Does the heart of the lover hastening to meet the girl he has not

yet won know as deep a thrill as that of him who returns after separation to the sweetheart he has wedded? I think the recapture of the past, the re-discovery of the known, the wooing of what is already your own, is the happiest adventure in the life of man. No El Dorado, no romance that I pictured when I set out had filled my heart with such a glow of expectation and joy as the memory and love of Ireland brought to me when I was returning. And I was young enough still to look onward. I looked onward, not backward to the past. I returned as an explorer to the familiar and the known. I was thirty-two. I still had treasures of youth to spend, and I had had few opportunities for that sort of extravagance during my years of hard work and rough living. Our station was somewhat remote in the hill country west of Timaru, and there were no ladies in our household. A few visits to the nearest town, a race meeting, a shooting expedition, a merry bout when friends from distant places met, and we were noisy and sometimes drank overmuch, were our relaxations. It had been a hard clean life undisturbed by the seductiveness of women. But though feminine influence had been absent, not so the thought of it. It was still the romance of romances, the wonder of all others, the wonder still to come. I was returning as a lover, though I did not know the lady I loved. So it seemed that all the desirable things life had to give were awaiting me at home, and that fulfilment would come of the parting words of old Mrs. Casey at Ballyquin when she said, ' May you come

back to Ireland to find all that you went away to look for.'

Our great ship moved away from her berth at the Circular Quay at Sydney on a morning of blazing sunshine in January. The deep blue ocean waters welled into a hundred inlets of the harbour and sparkled along promontories whose beauty had been defaced by suburban villas and the sprawling overgrowth of a great city. There were ships everywhere: ships along the quays, ships at anchor in mid-harbour, ships moored in deep water a stone's throw from the shore; and those deep waters and those ships conferred on the city a beauty which the hand of man could hardly destroy. As we went down the harbour I made a brief inspection of our liner. The part of her that was *ship* was hidden somewhere, and what I saw was a many-storied hotel with brightly decorated saloons and drawing-rooms and electric lights and fans and deck parades like those of a pier at a watering-place. The crowd of passengers that leant over the rails waving farewells to their friends had dispersed; some went in search of stewards and luggage, some swept the harbour with binoculars, some sat in deck chairs reading illustrated papers, and one had already produced a gramophone which was emitting nasal sounds on the boat deck. Most of them looked prosperous and satisfied with themselves, obviously Australians by their speech, and in type more akin to the commercial families I had known at Mine Ferry than to the people I had met in New Zealand. A young Englishman standing near me scanned the

crowd and remarked languidly, 'What do you think of being shut up for six weeks with that lot?' I had learned on my travels not to be depressed by a first view of people in bulk, and I gave him the benefit of my experience. 'Wait a bit,' I replied. 'They always look objectionable at first; we do ourselves—but every day at sea brings out new beauties in us. Before the end of the voyage you will almost overdo your friendship, and you'll probably fall in love.' He looked at me as if questioning my seriousness. 'Thank God,' he said, 'a lot of these Australians are only going round the coast, and we shall have more room after Fremantle. Listen to them talking. Is it Cockney or American or nigger, or what?' I am aware that the Australian accent touches the very limits of cacophony, but I was not prepared to admit it in talking to this young man, and said I thought the English drawl almost as bad, at which he looked at me in resigned silence. He was typical of a certain class of young Englishman who goes forth to survey his Empire taking his own little world with him, observing only the superficial, and patronising where he disapproves. I found afterwards that he knew nothing of Australia except some hotels and golf courses, not much of England, and that he had never been to Ireland; but he was a nice, fresh-looking lad, bored, if he had known it, by his own limitations, and with no unkindly feeling for any one. He slept much, and I hardly spoke to him again until the day before we arrived at Ceylon, when he was sitting with his back turned to the finest sunset we had

had, and remarked, ' I'm tired of this voyage,' the critic of the Australian accent pronouncing it *tah'd*, which made the word itself sound weary.

It may have been due to the solitude of our station life that I found so much interest in my new surroundings, and to my experience among all sorts and conditions of men, that I was freed from the social prejudice of my young English acquaintance and could welcome the familiarity of any man whose face I liked. Now, this assemblage of people, the stir and bustle of life, was an engrossing interest to me. I liked the hum of voices though the talk might be trivial, and the sound of laughter even if the joke were foolish. I had been out of the world and was going back to it. We were away on our voyage alive and well, fellow-travellers each with a story of his own, ship-mates bound together for a while by the comradeship of the journey.

There is much similarity in all voyages on ocean liners. Committees are formed among the passengers and amusements are organised. There are deck games, concerts, dances, and a daily sweep on the run of the ship. There is a band that plays waltz music out of tune, and bugles that are sounding constantly for meals. After dinner, when you are taking coffee and look round on the scene—the brightly furnished drawing-room, the soft electric lights, the ladies in gay evening dresses—you almost forget you are at sea, and when you go on deck there is a roof above your head and screens to shelter you from the wind. I found it all very agreeable, but how different from my voyage

of long ago: how differently the night fell on the brilliant track of the great steamer, and on the old sailing-ship with her dark decks and her masts up among the stars.

As the days passed and brought me nearer home my thoughts dwelt more and more on the old scenes and friends. Ten years could make few marks on the places I loved, but the people would be changed. It is quite certain that during periods of parting the picture within you of those absent undergoes a change. You may sometimes visualise one memory, sometimes another, but the whole presentation becomes different. Your knowledge of the effect years must have had, little details you have heard about your friend's appearance, or reports of his doings, become building material for your imagination, and you construct an individual who is not the old one and probably not a correct portrait of the new. So I must expect to find Brian and Aunt Margretta, and Mary Falcon and Jerry Hook and the others, not quite the same people as those who lived in my memory. My picture of Brian had probably changed more than any other. Sometimes I saw him as the dark-eyed, handsome, resolute-looking boy of school and college days; sometimes he appeared to me as when I had last seen him, thin and worn and bearded, but a new and imaginary man was oftener in my mind's eye. We had kept up a correspondence, writing long letters at long intervals since his return to South Africa after his release. A year afterwards he had gone back to Ireland apparently without its

being known that he had taken part in the war. He was now a public man whose name had even reached New Zealand, but for some time after his return he seemed to have kept in the background, working with Michael Byrne in the organisation of the Gaelic League, and devoting himself to the study of the Irish language. I had had letters from him at this time written from the Dingle peninsula, where he was pursuing his studies—picturesque letters full of his hopes and ideas for the building up of a state in Ireland which was to be free from the modern evils of industrialism. Then I heard of his being appointed to the professorship of Irish Language and Literature in the University of Cork, and it was at this time he became identified with the new Sinn Fein movement, and made speeches which brought him into public notice. The latest report I had of him was from a young priest who had come to our district shortly before I left New Zealand, who spoke of him as a man of great and growing influence, and of the enthusiastic devotion he had won from the students of Cork. Aunt Margretta, too, often mentioned him, but she was a poor letter-writer and told me nothing that helped me to see him. Her letters had nevertheless been the most welcome of all I received. They came with unfailing regularity; they told me all sorts of little things I liked to hear about the place and the people, and they were always brimming with affection. The last of them had brought the news of my grandfather's death. I was one of his trustees, and

the sale of what remained of the family property awaited my return. The servants had been dismissed, Aunt Margretta was living in lodgings in Mallow, and Uncle de Courcy was alone in the old house. My aunt's expressions of joy at the prospect of my return were unrestrained. Everything would be right, she thought, when I came, but I hoped she was not counting on my having enough money to keep the property in the family. I had realised enough by the sale of my share in the station to live on with economy and provide for her, and it was my intention to take up my own farm, which had recently become available by the death of the old tenant, who was childless, and to restore the tower and cottage and make my home there. The purchase of Ballyquin was beyond my means, but a hope that perhaps Mary Falcon, who had her own fortune and loved the place, might come to the rescue, entered my mind.

Occasional news of the Falcons and Mine Ferry reached me from Jerry Hook. Mr. Falcon had been made a peer and was Lord Grantry; Dick was still a bachelor, and was troubled by his obligation to provide an heir to the title and property. Mary's engagement to a distinguished artist and its subsequent cancellation appeared in the papers. From herself I heard, with her reasons given at some length, that she had joined the Church of Rome. This also was announced in the newspapers. She belonged to the class which finds it hard, when even the wish exists, to escape public notice, and photographs of groups in which she was conspicuous were to be seen

in the illustrated journals. One of these pictures showed her in yachting attire among others standing round the wheel on the spotless decks of the *Ione* at Cowes; another sent to me by Jerry Hook, with ridiculous comments, depicted a shooting-party at Bedminster Court, with the names of its members *reading from left to right.* Mary was in furs; next the Duke stood Mr. Pomphrey, and amongst the others I noticed Jemmy B'loke and Dick Falcon, rather bald and fat, but looking as happy and benignant as ever. To a stranger the picture could have little interest, but it brought to me in a flash a glimpse of a society I had long been separated from and had almost forgotten. It was the world of the people whose occupation in life was to amuse themselves and each other, of a class not yet to be found in the lands where I had been sojourning. I contemplated it perhaps with the disapproval of the democratic ideas I had acquired in a new country, and yet with a sort of satisfaction, for I am afraid I looked forward to the prospect of becoming again associated with the agreeable companions, good sportsmen and charming ladies, who belonged to the privileged circles of old-world society.

One other friend with whom I had corresponded was Clara Hook, who with her mother had joined Jerry at Grantry. Her letters were clever and entertaining, full of little comic and sometimes caustic allusions to her neighbours and even to her own household. The note of comradeship which we had struck on our first

acquaintance remained in them. She was not engaged to be married, and fancy sometimes presented her to me as a permanent companion. Jerry had brought out a couple of volumes of poetry which had been well reviewed but not bought. He had been made a director of the company, but seemed to detest business more than ever. And there was yet another. During the first couple of years of my absence I had exchanged letters with Annette, but since then had heard nothing of her. It would be a pleasant thing to seek her out, though at the risk of destroying a romantic memory. Often in hours of solitude, when I was away among the hills rounding up sheep, or sitting on a winter evening by the fireside, the vision of Annette and the delight of those evening hours when we were together on the slopes of Exmoor came back to me. How fresh was the picture I kept of the girl, captivating in face and form, her hat in her hand, her thick fair locks clustering above her brows as she walked at my side along the meadow path, or leapt from the stile, or allowed my arm to enfold her as we stood hidden among the hawthorns at the edge of the brook. And instead of this picture of her I should probably have to substitute one of an agreeable young matron with several uninteresting children, occupied with local interests and living in a suburban villa or over a chemist's shop in Birmingham. It would be foolish perhaps to renew my acquaintance, but I nevertheless looked forward to doing so. I was on a voyage of re-discovery.

These reflections about my old home and friends and the planning of my future life occupied me a good deal on our voyage across the Indian Ocean. After we arrived at Colombo an unexpected event changed the tenor of my thoughts and brought me into direct contact with the world I had been dreaming of, for among the people who joined the ship was Mary Falcon. The whole character of our ship was changed by the new arrivals. We had been a democratic party. Our couple of knights, our judge, our member of the Victorian Upper House, were regarded as ordinary citizens, and on the only occasion when I heard it suggested that Australia possessed an aristocracy of her own, the lady who made the claim was gently reproved by her English-born husband: 'When my wife did me the honour of marrying me,' he observed, 'I raised her from the Australian aristocracy to the English middle classes.'

At Colombo the new-comers seemed to belong to another race. I had seen something of this class at Grantry, but India had given it a special stamp. From King's House came the retiring Governor and his suite, and there was a judge who ruled a population as large as that of New Zealand, a General and his staff, a Peer, a Cabinet Minister, aides-de-camp, secretaries, and numerous ladies attached to the various households.

There was a family likeness, a family understanding, among them all, and though their manners were free from any assumption of social superiority it was not difficult to see that they were aware that the superiority existed. Quiet, un-

assertive but confident, assured of their position, satisfied with their standards of behaviour, these people belonged to a little self-contained world of their own; and there was this difference between them and the rest of the passengers, that we took a great deal of interest in them and they took very little in us.

Obviously of this class, and distinguished by the grace of appearance and manner that so often belongs to it, was Mary Falcon. I had a first glimpse of her as she was coming on board with the Governor's party, and I was standing in one of the groups of passengers curious to see the new-comers and anxious to conceal our curiosity. She was talking and laughing with a soldierly-looking companion, and had passed before I had recovered from my surprise. Afterwards when she came on deck and we met my heart was warmed by the gladness of her smile of recognition and the affection of her manner. 'I don't know how we got on without you,' she said, when we had done with our greetings and explanations. 'Not only all of them at Ballyquin but I too. Perhaps you don't know it, but there was never any one I looked up to so much and could be friends with at the same time. You're bigger and better-looking but you're not changed—not a bit; you're just the same as you were.' And when I told her that I was ten years older and a totally different person she wouldn't have it. 'Your views may have changed,' she persisted, 'but the you that is really yourself is the same. If I don't exactly know what you are going to say I know how you

are going to say it. What splendid luck that we should meet here.' There was no doubt about the sincerity of her pleasure. It was my first welcome home, and it warmed my heart.

In my voyage of re-discovery the first and one of the best of my discoveries was Mary. I immediately felt an expansion of my life in her friendship, and in time our intimacy became as complete as it can be between a man and a woman who are not lovers. Mary stands out among the women I have known because she possessed qualities which, when found in combination, and only then, give a woman her real power. A man may be ugly and uncouth but still great; a woman's strength can only be expressed through the charm of her womanhood. Mere beauty or female attractiveness will not take her very far; her mental endowments unaided can never place her on man's level; but these and those in union become transformed into a subtle and new influence that is among the greatest powers in the world for good and evil.

Mary was only fifteen when I had seen her last, and the ten years, which I might almost call years of arrested development in my own case, had been for her a period in which all the advantages of cultivation and social position had helped in the shaping of her womanhood. On the voyage home she told me a good deal about herself and her course of life, and from others came illuminating side-lights. She gave me some pictures of her college life at Cambridge, but it was from her fellow-student, Miss Fremington,

the niece of the Governor, whose family she had been visiting, that I heard that Mary had been a great rebel in those days and a leader in the suffragette movement. 'We followed her,' said Miss Fremington, 'because she was enthusiastic, and because we admired her, and the men listen to her now because she is so charming and so beautiful.' Mary spoke to me of the work she had at heart in improving the conditions and surroundings of the workpeople at Mine Ferry; but it was Sir John Flinders, the Cabinet minister who joined us at Colombo, who had been formerly on the board of the Falcon business, who told me that she had fought her father, attacked his colleagues one by one, and finally attended a meeting to press upon the directors the necessity for undertaking a housing scheme for the workpeople which on the face of it was financially unsound. 'And we did it and lost money, and it was right,' he said; 'and if it were done all through the country it would pay in the end. Your cousin has faith and she gives it to others.'

I saw in her myself a warm-hearted and most attractive girl whom it would be difficult to make love to, whose heart would never be reached through ordinary channels of flirtation. The very flame she kindled seemed a sacred thing to be guarded, an inspiration to give a nobler view of the relations of man and woman. I would have you know her, but I can only let you see and understand her gradually as I did myself.

As to her appearance, how difficult it is in

words to make a portrait. To speak of brown hair growing rather low on a broad brow, grey eyes, a straight nose, and a sweet mouth above a firm chin; of a form whose healthy development added to its grace; of a voice that was clear in speech and low in tone, is to give a description that might apply to a hundred attractive girls; every reader would form a different picture, and I must be content to give you materials for the portrait. The chief changes I noticed in her since I had seen her last were that her hair seemed a darker brown, her eyebrows a thicker, straighter line, her eyes a bluer grey, and the lower part of her face a little fuller in its modelling. Her complexion, too, was less delicate but no less beautiful: it looked as if its soft tints had been exposed to rain and sunshine which had given them a deeper hue without destroying their freshness. As to her figure, she had been rather slight and was now—I can do no better than borrow Mr. Austin Dobson's words:

> What an arm! and what a waist
> For an arm!

For a lady of such attractions and position to be unmarried at the age of twenty-five was unusual and a matter for comment. She had been engaged, as I mentioned, to a celebrated painter and had broken off the engagement. She spoke to me about this with an unreserve that showed her heart had not been touched. 'I admired his genius and his devotion to his art,' she told me, 'and at first I was influenced by his admiration

for me. It was very flattering from a man with his standards, and he said I gave him the inspiration he had hoped for to make his work greater.' She laughed. 'He did not love me; he loved my face and my figure. He didn't know me at all; he just looked *at* me no further, and he didn't want to know me. I found he was worshipping lines or curves or proportions or colouring,—something about my body. "Now don't stir," he would say. "I want just to absorb your profile while you are looking upward; just so." He cared nothing about my ideas or my faiths or my hopes. I felt almost like a glorified model: the more he admired me the sicker I got of it and then I gave it up. And he said that having lost me he would now find his inspiration in sorrow instead of joy.' She laughed again. 'I would not speak of it in this way if I thought he really cared a bit for me, but he didn't.'

Of a greater event in her life, her entry into the Catholic Church, she was more reserved. It surprised me that a girl of her independence of thought should have accepted the restrictions imposed by the change. She said in reply to my comment: 'There are some pathways we cannot go far on alone. You must always keep in touch with those before you, and to scale new heights you must be roped together like Alpine climbers. You must trust to some one who has foothold.' And at another time she said: 'You can only have patriotism where the people are a nation; and the Church is a spiritual nation that awakens and preserves our faith in

the best hopes that can be shared by all. Think of the fellowship it brings.'

She was a centre of attraction on the ship. Where she was sitting, a little group would assemble; men were eager to have her for a partner in the deck games or claim her for a companion in the usual walk before dinner. I was surprised at her versatility: she was equally animated in a party of gossiping ladies, or in talking to young men about the sports and amusements they lived for, or in discussing political questions with an Indian judge or a Cabinet minister. She had a woman's admiration of soldiers, and showed something like hero-worship for a distinguished old General who was returning with us after an inspection of the Indian army, and whose pleasure in her society was very obvious. Though myself greatly attracted I did not fall in love, for I could contemplate with interest and without jealousy her intimacy with others. And I was privileged in being given more of her company than any one else. At meals, the great gathering times, we were divided. I sat with my own Australian companions and she with the Governor's party at a large table specially reserved, a table at which there always seemed to be more laughter and conversation than at any other. Mary introduced me to her set, where I found some claim to notice on the strength of my having ridden in races at up-country meetings and knowing a good deal about the trout fishing in New Zealand; and Mary made herself delightful to my Australian

bourgeois friends by the interest she showed, and perhaps felt, in hearing about their home life and in planning trips for them in England. I told her in chaff that she was all things to all men, and she replied that she *was* if she liked them.

The fuller, gayer ship of the second half of our journey made the contrast to my old voyage in the outward-bound sailing-ship more marked. My love of everything that floats extends to a liner, and I might now be even willing to give up the romance and monotony of sailing for the comforts and diversions of a hotel steamer. It was undoubtedly pleasant; the great ocean was around you without its dangers and buffetings; you sat at ease on level decks and talked or read while you sped through sparkling waters, or idly watched the pageant of the sunset, or leant on the rail with a fair companion in the warm tropic night and heard merry voices round you or the sound of music from the drawing-room. But the mystery was not there: the great ship and her company, the engines and upholstery, the bandsmen, the bridge players and stewards, had disenchanted the ocean. 'As the presence of a hydropathic establishment would banish the spell of the loneliest and remotest mountain or moor you were ever on,' I said to Mary. 'But luckily the liner has no foundations like the building,' she replied.

I was amazed that I did not fall in love with Mary on that voyage. I had emerged from remote places ready to fall in love with almost

any nice girl, and here was one of superlative charms in delightful propinquity. If I needed a test as to my feelings for her it was provided by the absence of any shade of jealousy on my part when I perceived how deep was her interest in Brian. We constantly spoke of him, and it delighted her to recall memories of those days of her girlhood when she was with us at Ballyquin. 'I did not let you see it and you wouldn't believe how I looked up to you both,' she said. 'Of course you were young men and I was almost a child. I have never quite got over that feeling. I still have the remains of that respect for you.'

'But Brian was your hero,' I complained. 'That's the worst of having common sense like me. You can't be a hero. But I know the way Brian has with him. It used to affect me too. When you were with him you used to seem to be out on an adventure.'

That was the beginning of a long talk, which I remember very clearly, when Mary, whether deliberately or inadvertently I hardly knew, gave me a real insight into her heart. We were in the northern part of the Red Sea walking on deck before dinner. The sun was setting over the great wastes of desert and the mountains of Sinai, and everything far and near was lighted with strange hues of pink madder and valerian—the colour was its own — darkening in the mountain valleys to shades of purple.

'Do you remember that evening at your tower when we were all asked to describe what

we saw to the blind man, Mr. Byrne?' Mary asked me. 'How hard this would be to describe!'

A steward came on deck and with legs astride blew a terrific blast on a trumpet as a warning for preparation for dinner.

'That makes the scene thoroughly British,' I laughed. 'A P. & O. steward could anglicise the kingdom of heaven. A blind man would have visions of a mail steamer and dinner and dividends and Union Jacks. Nothing you could say would persuade him that yonder was Mount Sinai and that night was falling in the wilderness of Zin.'

'The wilderness of Zin,' she mused on the words in a reverie. 'No, it is not there.'

'Wherever you go you find the new world,' I said. 'Hotels on the mountains, telephones, advertisements,

> Some Mrs. Tomkins taking tea
> And toast upon the wall of China.'

'Yes,' she laughed, 'except Ireland. Ireland seems almost the only place where you can feel the past. How well I remember that evening we were speaking of at your tower, when the mountains looked larger and nearer as the twilight came on and the river was rippling through the reeds.'

'Brian walked home with you, there were corn-crakes in the grass, Trenta Byrne was jealous because he went with you. She was a strange, jealous child.'

'We had picked some great golden kingcups

on the river-bank. She had arranged some of them in her black hair.'

'She was very picturesque and knew it,' I said.

'I saw her about a year ago with Brian coming out of Westminster Cathedral. Her father was dead. I heard she had been left by him in Brian's charge. She has become a celebrated singer.'

'Her name has even reached New Zealand.'

'She is wonderfully beautiful.'

'And this time you were jealous of her,' I said rather thoughtfully, and was surprised at the reply.

'I think I was perhaps. I don't like her. I have had one or two talks with Brian about Ireland. I long to see him working for reconciliation between our countries. She is bitterly antagonistic and she has influence with men. A great natural gift like a glorious voice added to personal beauty makes a woman a queen among men. Singing or acting. Nothing else will do it.'

One of the children whose hearts she had won ran forward and sprang to her arms.

'Look out for me after dinner, Nick,' she said, 'I want to continue our talk.'

The stars were bright when we came back on deck, and the night sky was of that dark blue that is nowhere so intense as above the deserts. The lights of Ismalia shone in the distance to the north. We found quiet seats where the decks were open to the sky. The February night was just warm

enough to make it pleasant to sit still, and I lighted my pipe in great comfort. Mary, to my surprise, for I had not seen her smoke before, accepted my offer of a cigarette.

'I am dissatisfied with my life, Nick,' she said. 'It is too easy, too comfortable. Everything we ask for is given to us, everything done for women in my position. I often wish we had to go through some compulsory hardship. We are spoilt.'

'Some of you are. I don't think you are, but I wonder you are not,' I said. 'You get a great deal of admiration, and I expect you generally have your own way.'

'What do I get? What have I to look forward to?' she continued. 'Another London season; the yacht in the summer; Scotland and shooting parties in the autumn; then house parties at Grantry. I want to break away from it all and do something I can put my heart into.'

'What about your work among the people at Mine Ferry?' I asked.

'Yes,' she agreed, 'that is something. It has been worth doing, but I am ashamed to say I don't care enough about it. It is a duty: it does not fill my life nor inspire me as with people like Mr. and Mrs. Merthyr. You remember the couple that live down among the works at Mine Ferry? It is splendid work as far as it goes, but the whole system that makes it necessary is wrong, the system that made me rich and imposes no responsibilities on me.'

'You can't fight against that system. It is

established, but the workpeople are learning now to look after their own interests under it.'

'Brian has ideas of a state built up on co-operative principles. The movement has been started in Ireland.'

'A dream,' I said.

'Well, I want to be at work with the dreamers. All the great things in the world, the cathedrals, the poems, the religions, were the dreams of some one before they became the realities. The humiliating thing is that women to be effective can only work with or through men. I used to think differently. You know I was a militant suffragette for a while. Imprisonment helped that cause, but it could not survive laughter.'

'There were too many old maids on the job,' I said.

'Some of them young enough, and the best of women,' she said impatiently. 'I know that a woman's real business in life is to be a wife and a mother, and I am troubled and perplexed about those women who long for the fulfilment of their lives and have little chance of it. Splendid women.'

'With brains enough to be critical in their choice and not sex enough to attract the men they admire.'

She seemed annoyed at my remark and did not reply.

'But you,' I continued, 'you are attractive and could choose where you like, and you prefer your freedom.'

'Nonsense,' she exclaimed. 'It's not free-

dom, it's restriction. Marriage and marriage with love is a woman's freedom, her only freedom, except for the few who have some special vocation.'

'And you, who could choose where you like, remain single?'

'You are very flattering,' she replied, 'but quite wrong. Assume that a girl is good-looking and has money of her own, as I have, and has ideas too. She has to accept a man and a career at the same time. Her heart may be in the country, and she may have to live over a bank in a provincial town or at a Government House in Australia. She may be deeply interested in the church and fancy a Bishop's palace, and yet not like the personality of the necessary clergyman. She may admire a sailor, and yet object to living alone for three-quarters of the year while he is at sea.' She laughed at the pictures her fancy presented. 'But, of course, if she is in love she always takes the man and sacrifices her aspirations, and her career is decided for her. It is not easy to find a man she could marry who is pursuing the aims she has at heart.'

'I hope the girl I am to marry won't want a career,' I said, and we began talking of my own prospects and plans for the future. She had, however, let me see how deeply she felt about the new problems that had arisen in connection with the relations of men and women in modern life; and in her own case I formed a conclusion that, whether she realised it or not, she had seen one man, and he was Brian, through whose life she felt that she could express her own. She spoke of

having met him once or twice when she was staying with Aunt Margretta at Ballyquin, and he had come down from Cork to see her, and again at Mine Ferry at the last election, when he had gone there to support a Socialist working man who was opposing the Ministerial candidate. 'I was helping in the fight against him,' she told me, 'and we used to meet and have battles about our principles. He was enthusiastic and eloquent, and seemed to think he could persuade me and might even carry me over to his side during the election. He is so confident and convinced he is right, and he often is, but he cannot think fairly about people in our class or about England. Why should he hate England, the England of great traditions, the England that has carried free institutions and justice all over the world?'

'Yes, forcible feeding!' was my comment. 'Good for some people perhaps, Ireland does not like it.'

'Oh,' she said, 'don't imagine I have English views about Ireland. I'm Irish all over, and I'm a Nationalist. I am almost in disgrace with my own people about that. But I am British too. I believe the British Empire is the greatest civilising power in the world, and I want to see Ireland part of it. We are really one people. Look at the Irish names in English history.'

'Splendid!' I said, 'but what about the English names in Irish history?'

'Of course,' she continued, a little disconcerted, 'there have been wrongs and misgovernment and misunderstandings, but we want friendship and

reconciliation, and Brian is working not for that but against it. This new Sinn Fein movement he is in is almost Republican in its aim.'

'Well,' I replied, not only speaking as an Irishman but expressing the colonial view, 'England has been so stupid and arrogant in refusing Home Rule to Ireland that I don't wonder that the exasperation produces extremists. I am a moderate man myself,' I added sententiously, 'and shall have to talk to Brian about this.'

'I am quite sure he will talk to *you*,' she answered with a smile.

The days of our voyage sped pleasantly. We were idle without the self-reproach we might have felt on shore, and the movement and the work of the ship gave us the feeling of being part of her activity and doing something ourselves. As we drew nearer home people began to arrange their plans for arrival, and the prospect of dutiful meetings between husbands and wives lowered the vitality of some of our flirtations, as cold acts on ephemerae. My young English acquaintance, who had so often complained that he was tired of the voyage and who had slept through the greater part of it, woke up for a short time at Port Said. He returned to the ship in the evening with sparkling eyes, and spoke of his expedition on shore with glowing animation. He had been shown a hermaphrodite, and the sight had awakened in him an interest which the wonder and beauty of far lands had failed to arouse.

At Gibraltar we found a British fleet. The battleships, cruisers, and destroyers, horrible

engines of modern mechanical warfare, dressed in the flags of memorial tradition, with the historic Rock in the background, made a striking scene, and there was an uplifting of hearts both English and colonial. Here was visible sovereignty. No wonder a jealous Kaiser had brushed his moustaches higher and vowed to have the like or better, but what was there to fear? Britain could smile, confident in her security. Two keels to one? What craven nonsense! Was not one Englishman or one English ship as good as two foreigners? I did not show enough enthusiasm to satisfy Mary, and when she asked me 'Does not that make you feel proud?' my reply that the best thing about it was that it would probably never be used seemed to displease her.

Soon after we had dropped anchor the Admiral himself came on board to visit the ex-Governor and give invitations to a ball to be held that evening on his flagship. Mary, who knew the Admiral, was of course among the invited, with inclusion of any friends she might wish to bring, and I thus found myself among the élite who went off in the Admiral's pinnace after dinner.

The decks of the flagship, transformed into a ballroom decorated with flags, were bright with the movement of ladies in their gayest evening dresses and men in uniform. It was a pleasant evening, but I should not have thought it worth recording but for the introduction it gave me to Commander Fremington, who afterwards became Mary's suitor. He was the Uncle of Mary's friend, the Miss Fremington who was on

board our ship, but still a young man. Mary brought him to me after a dance with the intimation that he knew my brother Bob, who from Fremington's account seemed to have lost little of the wildness of his midshipman days. Mary was reminded of an unexpected visit my brother had paid them at Grantry on a Sunday morning, when all the family were at church and returned to find him walking in the kitchen garden with a housemaid on each arm. 'And he went to church with my mother in the evening,' she laughed. 'Sailors are always ready to make themselves agreeable.'

There is certainly something very pleasing about sailors as a class: they express their manliness and many virtues with a natural simplicity, and the sea seems to salt their moral natures against corruption, so that we are inclined to look leniently at their very vices, and laugh when we speak of their having wives in every port while we should be censorious of such a charge against others. When, as often occurs, you find one among them who has not only the sailor's attractiveness but also brains, zeal in his profession, and joy in serving his country, you have the best type that England—and it is a pre-eminently English type—produces. Such a man I soon discovered was Fremington, and such a man I knew would find favour with Mary. He was prepossessing in appearance, of good height, with clear skin, a firm mouth, and keen grey eyes. There was an earnestness and concentration about him which struck me at once. After a lingering look at

Mary as she went away on the arm of her next partner he gave me his whole attention, and began questioning me about the popular feeling in Australia and New Zealand towards the mother country. Were they aware of the danger of war with Germany? Were they likely to make larger contributions to the fleet? What of the Irish element in colonial politics, reports of which suggested disloyalty to the Empire? England, he said, was asleep—'Asleep upon her ancient deeds'. Politicians were disputing as to whether we should build two or four dreadnoughts when we wanted ten, and destroyers and submarines. 'Think of it,' he said, 'a couple of well-directed shots and this ship ceases to be. A couple of dozen shots might put an end to the British Empire. Sailors know it. It's our politicians who must be roused. You people on shore ought to be thinking of nothing else, preaching the danger, warning the people.' Mary, returning to conduct me to a partner for the next dance, heard the last few words of his animated speech and her look showed her approval. I am sure she felt that I was in need of a little wholesome stimulation.

A fear that I may seem to overpraise Mary deters me from speaking of the charm her beauty conferred on her surroundings that evening. If she were fond of admiration, as of course she was, she received even more than was good for her. From the Admiral himself to his youngest officer she was the most attractive prize the dancing offered, and I noticed it was with the

older men and the boys rather than with the intermediates of my own age that she seemed the gayest and the most ready in comradeship. Fremington, however, was favoured in securing her partnership in three dances, and he held on to his luck and found some pretext for accompanying us to our ship in the Admiral's launch for a last word of farewell.

Green-grey Atlantic seas, running high before a stiff south-westerly wind, raised my spirits and gave a real sense of home-coming.

My thoughts then became much occupied about my plans for the future. Though I had done a great deal of hard work during the last ten years and saved some money, it was to work and not to leisure that I was looking forward. I had one engrossing interest—the study of natural history, and this and the writing a book on bird life which I had in mind could be pursued side by side with my farming. My immediate task would be the taking up of my own farm, the carrying out of my long-projected scheme of making my tower and the cottage habitable, and the settlement of my grandfather's affairs. From what information I had it seemed clear that the sale of Ballyquin, after the payment of the mortgages and my grandfather's debts, would leave very little for Aunt Margretta and Uncle de Courcy. The sale was imperative, and though I would have given much to keep the place in the family my own capital was too small to allow me to be the purchaser. I had cherished a vague hope that Mary might buy it, and before we

parted I ventured to give her the hint. It was on our last talk on the voyage, the evening when we were passing Finisterre, and the scene comes back to me,—the great grey Atlantic seas, the low-driven clouds, and Mary in oilskin coat and hood, her colour heightened, her cheeks wet with spray, looking delightfully fresh and in tone with the surroundings.

'You must come over to see us very soon,' she said. 'And I shall have some of my nicest girl friends to meet you. Of course you will be wanting a wife.'

I agreed that I was quite prepared to take one.

'And you will be wanting to see the Hooks too. You're one of the few people Jerry seems to like, and Clara—there's a precentor or minor canon at Wells dying to marry her and she won't make up her mind. I believe she's waiting to have another look at you before she decides.'

'Would she do for me?' I asked with real interest.

'M'm. I'm not sure, but you'll soon know when you see her.'

'I shall be very busy for a month or two,' I said, 'with the Ballyquin business and my own place. Did it ever occur to you to buy Ballyquin yourself?'

It had not occurred to her, but she did not dismiss the proposal as absurd; indeed the scheme appealed to her imagination and she discussed it with interest, all that was Irish in her captivated

by the idea of becoming possessor of the place where her family had traditions, but showing herself her father's daughter in the business-like way she regarded the financial side of the transaction.

'Ballyquin is more like home to me than any place in the world,' she said, 'and to keep it together, to give employment, to make improvements, would be something worth doing. Instead of talking about loving Ireland I should be proving myself a good Irishwoman.'

If I could satisfy her that with good management the property would produce a reasonable return for the outlay, and I could supervise it myself, she was prepared to consider it. It was settled that I should go thoroughly into the details and report to her, and she promised that if necessary she would come over to Ireland and make her final decision on the spot.

'And we may be neighbours yet,' she said as we were saying good-bye at the end of the voyage, 'if you're really going to live in your tower. I hope you won't find it too damp in winter. For the summer it sounds delightful. You can pace up and down that beautiful floor of grass between the ruined walls of the abbey and sit on your own doorstep and catch fish, and you can have doves again after four hundred years in the columbarium. You really mean to go there?'

'Why, my dear,' I replied, 'I wouldn't live anywhere else in the world. I've been dreaming of it for years.'

'I hope, Nick,' she said, 'you haven't been expecting too much, that you won't be disappointed when you get home. Brian says that Ireland always makes you dream beautiful dreams about her and that they are never fulfilled.'

Brian! Once more I noticed her readiness to speak of him or remember his remarks. He seemed at the same time to attract her and to awake her antagonism.

There is no pleasanter English port to arrive at than Plymouth unless it be Southampton; but the beautiful Sound did not look its best in the grey March morning, and I heard some of our Australian friends comparing it unfavourably with Sydney harbour. Mary wished me to accompany her to Grantry and spend a day or two there on my way to Ireland, but home was calling me and I took an opportunity which offered of travelling by a coasting steamer that was sailing from Plymouth on the day of my arrival, direct for Cork.

When I came on deck next morning I looked out on the familiar coast line and the green treeless hills outside Cork harbour. Soon Roche's Point was passed and Queenstown rose out of the haven, its many coloured lines of building and the grey spire of the cathedral catching the first light of the sun. The waters were shadowy, the place still half asleep as we passed, but by the time we reached Passage the river was blue and gold, and the ripples flashed against the sides of the craft moored along the quay or lying at anchor in the

roadstead. "The Town of Passage", the words shine like a text.

> The town of Passage
> Is both large and spacious
> And situated
> Upon the say—

It was a welcome home, a welcome not only to the Ireland of to-day but to the Ireland of a past generation. Oh! the magnificent vitality, the kindliness, the irresponsibility of those spirits of Ireland's past who could refresh our world with laughter:

> Mud cabins swarm in
> This place so charmin'
> And sailor's garments
> Hung out to dry,
> And each abode is
> Both snug and commodious,
> With pigs melodious
> In their straw-built sty.

A place that with all its disadvantages was full of the joy of life and could find a poet to celebrate it in song. The beauty of the river scene was no dearer to the most patriotic modern eye than to him who wrote:

> There's ships from Cadiz
> And the Barbadis,
> But the lading trade is
> In whiskey punch.

And I could wish that more of that spirit of fun that lightened the burden of Ireland in the past was with us to-day. But I lose that spirit while I moralise. I did not do so that morning; the

lilt of the song was in my heart. For this again was old Ireland: there I saw the familiar fields divided by great earth banks grown with white-thorn and furze, the first gold colour of which was just appearing; there were the thatched cottages and the road along which the people were going to the town in ass carts; there in the distance the spires of the old city of Cork. An hour later the city was behind me, and more excited than when I had been a schoolboy returning for the holidays, I saw the long-remembered features of the land-scape from the windows of the train. The end of my journey was near. My own country was over the next horizon. Mallow would be the next station, for that was Blarney we had passed. Blarney with its groves and statuary—

> Bold Neptune, Plutarch
> And Nicodamus
> All standing naked
> In the open air.

Blessed be your memories, O Milliken and Mahony, and your jolly contemporaries! Good luck to your souls wherever they are! For generations to come may Irishmen returning like me to their native shores feel the spirit of our forefathers greeting them in your words.

CHAPTER IX

MY TOWER IN DESMOND [1]

EVERY ONE of course was older, every one except Aunt Margretta looked a little older. Time had made its mark on the people but had left the countryside unchanged: not a sign of innovation or improvement or disfiguration did I see.

And yet at first it did not look quite the same place. Our pictures are made up of a hundred stored memories, of a hundred different presentations. When I was far away and thought of our mountains they had appeared to me, sometimes with their blue slopes dappled with the shadows of passing clouds, sometimes glowing in the purple and crimson of sunset. I had seen my tower as it looked in summer days rising out of the blue water of the lough, or as when it stood out dark and lonely on winter evenings when the river was in flood and the wild fowl were on the wing; and when I thought of Ballyquin I was in the old schoolroom with Brian and my brother, or in my grandmother's still-room among her fragrant stores, or in Uncle de Courcy's work-

[1] Desmond (Irish, Deas Mhumhan) is South Munster.

shop. I saw the yards full of workpeople, with sheep-shearing or threshing or some delightful activity of the farm going on, or perhaps on winter nights when the men had gone home and the horses were stabled and the yard gates were shut and all the world outside was dark and mysterious. All this could not be restored at once, and some of it had gone for ever. At first the mountains looked lower than of old, my ruins in the cold March sunshine less romantic, and the empty house and the deserted yards at Ballyquin had an unnatural silence; but by degrees the old expression of the place returned. Every day of the spring brought its restoration of something that had been treasured for me—in the talk of the rooks, the songs of the birds, the smell of the earth after rain, the smell of the turf smoke from cottage chimneys, the accent and tone of familiar speech.

Beyond everything else I had looked forward to meeting Brian and Aunt Margretta. When I returned Brian was absent in America, where he was engaged on some mission in connection with the Gaelic League. My aunt, since my grandfather's death, had been living in Mallow as a paying guest with the two Miss Beresfords, maiden ladies, and old friends of the family. After being mistress at Ballyquin and a lady of some standing in the county the change of fortune might have been expected to depress her, but her happy spirits were uninjured, her heart was young and hopeful as ever. She made me feel like the prodigal son in the warmth of her welcome; she

laughed, she wept, she embraced me and then held me at arm's length to see whether I was changed, and behaved like a mother and an aunt and a sweetheart in one.

'You've come to stay, you really mean to remain?' she asked as if fearful of some change in my plans.

'Yes,' I replied, 'and you're going to keep house for me. I shall repair the tower and add a couple of rooms to the cottage and we shall have all we want.'

She was like a girl in her joy at the prospect, and if she had known that Mary was going to buy Ballyquin I think her happiness would have been complete, but I said nothing about that until it was definitely settled.

Uncle de Courcy, I found, was living alone in the house at Ballyquin, using the kitchen as his sitting-room and cooking his own meals. He was little changed: his thick brown beard had hardly a grey hair, his eyes were as blue as the sky, and the coat he wore, stained with a dozen colours of paint, I actually remembered when I was a boy. His mind had evidently been uneasy as to what would happen to him when the place was sold, and his relief at my return and faith in my power to set everything right were pathetic. His joy at seeing me again led to one of his little outbreaks, and the day after our first meeting when I called at the house again I found him in the workshop rather drunk, playing tunes on his jew's harp.

Before I left home the cottage which had

been built against the ruined walls of the abbey refectory, at the end of the plateau close under the tower, had been occupied by Mrs. Casey, widow of our old coachman, and her son Jamesy, who was a servant of nondescript occupation, sometimes working in the stables, sometimes in the house. Jamesy was a reliable fellow of the quaint ugliness which boys like but which is not attractive to women. In those old days he loved Mary Ann Begley, the cook, who was a few years his senior; a woman with a comely presence and a sharp tongue, but he had not found his love reciprocated. He had remained faithful and was at last rewarded; for his mother's death and the break-up of the household at Ballyquin happening about the same time, Mary Ann Begley, instead of seeking a new situation as a cook, consented to take up her abode in the cottage as a wife, or rather as the owner of a husband—the predominance of her partnership being shown by the fact that instead of becoming Mrs. Casey she retained her name and he was henceforth known as James Begley.

As I wished to be on the spot to superintend my work at Ballyquin and the restoration of the tower, I put a camp-bed into a room at the cottage and took Jamesy and his wife into my employment, she as housekeeper, he as groom and general servant, an arrangement which suited me and relieved them of much anxiety about their future. The cottage contained only three rooms and I had to take my meals in the kitchen, but colonial life had accustomed me to

such quarters, and Mrs. Begley, who was a good cook and a housewife of stern cleanliness, made me quite comfortable. My horse I kept in the stables at Ballyquin.

Mary came over in April and very quickly made up her mind to buy the property. After paying off the mortgages and my grandfather's debts, about a thousand pounds, each, remained for Aunt Margretta and Uncle de Courcy. An auction was avoided as my grandfather left the pictures to Aunt Margretta, the books to me, and Mary bought in everything else. Having decided on the purchase of the place she became enthusiastic about her plans for dealing with it. Ireland, she believed, was suffering from the failure of the landed gentry, partly on account of their poverty, to lead the people or help them industrially. She had money, and felt it was her duty as an Irishwoman to use it in promoting the welfare of the country. And the way in which she had chosen to do this made a special appeal to her inclinations. She saw at once that she would become a personality in the place, and she had immediate evidence that the employment she was able to give would be a godsend to the neighbourhood. With the exception of Tom Condon, who had been retained to look after the unsold stock, all the Ballyquin men had been dismissed on my grandfather's death and were out of work or were doing odd jobs for the neighbouring farmers. One of the happiest expeditions I ever took was when I went with Mary to the houses of all the old workpeople—

Ned Murphy the ploughman, Johnny Roche the gardener, Tim Casey, who had followed his father as coachman, and all the others—to inform them that they were to return at once to their employment. It became speedily known that orders had been given by Mary for the renovation of the house, and there were hints of new undertakings, lime-burning and the erection of saw-mills, which would employ additional labour. What wonder that so great a benefactress to the neighbourhood, who was also a beautiful lady and had a way with her that won the hearts of the people, should be looked up to as if she were a queen. Her plans as to the use of Ballyquin House were not settled, but I found that she had a scheme for making it her home for part of the year and entertaining there some of her poorer friends who needed holidays. But this was for the future. Until her plans were settled she thought it would be a good thing to have the house occupied and actually had in view some tenants, a Colonel Fremington, elder brother to the naval officer we had met at Gibraltar, who wanted summer quarters for his family. Meantime I had instructions to put the whole place into good repair.

In looking after the estate and making myself conversant with farming conditions, which were very different from those of New Zealand, and in carrying out my own building operations, my time was fully occupied. In my farming I was not too proud to make myself the temporary pupil of Ned Murphy and Tom Condon, and

in my building John Nihil the stone mason, and Connors the carpenter were my advisers.

We had many consultations on the spot before deciding on our plan for restoring the tower. Though its masonry was sound it was internally more dilapidated than in the days when Mickety Mack had made the bottom floor his home, and Brian and I had our stronghold above. The lowest chamber of all, which was entered from the water-gate and was nothing more than a boat-house, needed no repair; the one above, Mickety Mack's, being lighted by mere slits in the walls, could not easily have been made habitable; on the two top floors we concentrated our attention. The topmost, our old lair, which was really a noble chamber with its great stone fire-place and mullioned windows, I decided to make my library and sitting-room. Our plan was to lay new wood floors on the stone vaulting, leave the walls unplastered, merely re-pointing the masonry, and line the lower part of the room with a wainscot of plain unstained oak and oak bookcases. On the floor below we arranged to plaster and distemper the external walls, and by subdividing it with wood partitions to make three good bedrooms. For furniture I was provided, by the permission Mary gave me to take anything I cared for from the house at Ballyquin, and I had a few things of my own—a cabinet containing a collection of eggs, some cases of stuffed birds, and a few family portraits which belonged to my father. My books, too, with my own volumes on Natural History added to

those which my grandfather had left me made a respectable library. Whether the large pieces of furniture could be brought up the winding staircase or would have to be taken to pieces and put together in the rooms was a problem we had not yet solved.

On the flat roof, which was supported by a stone barrel vault, little work was needed beyond the renewal of the leads and gutters. The ivy had climbed over the battlements and wallflowers and ferns grew in the crevices of the masonry, but the roof had remained weatherproof through the centuries. It was a room in itself with the sky for a ceiling, and I looked forward to sleeping there under the stars in my camp-bed on summer nights. The restoration of the tower I left in the hands of Nihil and Connors, with the help of one or two labourers, and its progress seemed likely to be leisurely. For the addition of a couple of rooms to the cottage, which was a simple matter, I employed a local builder, and lost no time in getting the work in hand. All these operations interested me greatly. We had erected a temporary shed against one of the old walls as a workshop, and whenever I had an hour to spare I used to smoke a pipe there with Nihil and Connors, sometimes with Uncle de Courcy as a visitor. It was pleasant to watch the mason chiselling a bit of stonework which was to replace the broken mullion of a window or the carpenter fitting the mitres of the oak panelling. Nihil was rather reticent, but Connors loved talking and was full of reminiscences of the past.

'That was a great coffin I made for the old master,' he said one day, alluding to it not for the first time, 'and I did not yet tell you the whole history of it. He sent for me to come to him, and he on his deathbed, and says he, "Tom, how long will it take you to make me a coffin?" says he. "Please God, 'twill be long before your honour'd have any use for one," says I. "I'll give you a week," says he; "there's some seasoned oak Mr. de Courcy have abroad in the shed. Make it strong," says he, "and make it straight, the same width all down, no shoulders and no polish, and bring it here to me to look at when 'tis finished." Well, he sent out to the yard every day to ask how 'twas getting on, and when 'twas finished the young fella and meself carried it up to him and he pitched in the pillows. "That's a good coffin surely," says he, when he saw it on the table oppossit the bed. "I'm obliged to you, Tom," says he, "and tell me, what's your charge for that job?" "I wouldn't make any charge, your honour," says I; "'twas a labour of love." At that he grinned in the old way he'd grin when a man'd make a fool of himself. "I'm well pleased," says he, "that the bloody undertakers won't be making a profit out of me corpse, and I'll have none of them hearses neither. They'll drive me over to Kilduggan in the old coach with the pair of grey horses. I'm very grateful to you, Tom Connors, and I won't offer to pay you, but go open that cupboard over-right you and you'll see a bottle of whisky there, 'tis twenty-five years old. Take that with you and drink all you can hold of

it the day I'm buried." 'Twas only two weeks after that he died, the Lord have mercy on him.'

My grandfather was not popular, yet others besides Tom Connors gave voluntary service at his funeral. Those who opened the ground to the old vault took no wages for their labour, and John Nihil, who restored the crumbling monument and re-carved the coat of arms, would not have undertaken the work for payment.

'He was a grand wicked old man,' said John to me one day when we were on the tower together, 'he did nothing for Ireland, but he was a grand old gentleman.'

It was on this occasion he startled me by an allusion he made to Brian.

'He's the only man alive in Ireland that ever fought against England,' he said, 'and please God he'll live to do it again.'

We had been talking about the Gaelic League and the Sinn Fein movement, and a lecture Brian had given in Mallow on the Irish language. Nihil remembered and treasured every sentence of the speech and he repeated passages of it to me. 'We are children,' he recited, 'who have been in the house of strangers. We have learnt their language and we have forgotten the tongue of our childhood and of our old home. English is a great language, but it is not our own. Our own is an outcast. Only in the names of the places around us or in the talk of old people among the mountains or away in the west or in the few words of love we have for girls and children does the old language hold. English is a great speech, and

used by half the world, and 'tis well we have it to read the fine books that were once written in it and to do our business with the world. 'Tis the language we can use for our buying and our selling, 'tis the language for the law courts and the custom houses, but let us bring back the old language to our homes. Let Irish be the tongue of our poets and the familiar speech of our firesides, for our talk with the children, for our courting when we meet our sweethearts, and for our prayers when we kneel before God.'

Nihil rose and stretched out his arms as though he were delivering the speech himself.

'Mr. Brian has a great gift of speaking,' I remarked.

'He have, and what's more he have a great gift of doing,' said Nihil. 'There's many can speak, but he's the only Irishman alive that's fought against England.'

I was startled; I believed no one knew of this but myself. I had gathered from a remark of Brian's that he thought it were better it should not be known.

'How did you hear of that?' I asked.

'Truth will out,' he replied, 'the same as murder. There's only a few knows now, but the whole of Ireland will know before long and be proud of him too, and 'twill help him to lead us. Isn't that why he didn't stand for parliament? To do it he'd have to get a pardon from the king, and divil a pardon he'd ask for.'

The renewal of friendship with the people whom I had known when I was a boy was very

pleasant. A few old neighbours had gone away. Mr. Todds, a retired linen-draper from Cork, had bought Mount Hilary, and had renamed it Mount Todds, there were farmers in Golden Hill and Kilnamona, and the Wrixons and the Boyles, the former owners, were living in Dublin or England; but most of the families were in their old places, and where they had sold their farms to the tenants remained in occupation of the demesnes. They were nearly all of them poor, and lived in a sort of aristocratic shabbiness. At Fountains, Colonel MacMahon's place, I thought the trees in the park looked nobler than ever, and the house stood dignified and unapologetic in its neglect. His coachman's tall hat must have been the oldest in Ireland, but there was a gallant cockade in it. The Colonel, who was one of my grandfather's few friends, gave me a kind welcome while expressing his surprise that I should have come back to a country that our new patriots were making unfit for decent people to live in.

'I wouldn't wonder,' said he, 'but you'd want that tower of yours yet to defend yourself in, that is if you intend to speak your mind and stick to your opinions. If you're not afraid to tell the truth that's always enough to earn a shot at you in Ireland.' He spoke as if he fully thought I shared his views, just as John Nihil seemed to think I shared his. I have often found myself so treated by people I disagreed with, perhaps because I seldom interrupt, or because I find so much justification for every one's point of view, and so little truth in any one's conclusions.

My cousin, Jim Nagle of Temple Mary, Mr. Foote of Clogheen, Lord Liscarroll, and others, though less emphatic, were hardly more optimistic. With the sales of their farms their old importance as landlords was gone; with the establishment of the County Councils which refused to elect them as representatives their influence in local affairs had become small. They continued to farm the demesne lands, glad to get along without actual loss, and they still kept good horses and hunted two or three days a week; but they seemed to have lost their stake in the country and to be living with no definite aim in view. Sport was the one thing in which they were really interested, and the love of sport still remained a bond of fellowship between the classes. My cousin, Tom Nagle, a gallant horseman who had won the Duhallow Point-to-Point twice running, was more popular in the country than the most violent politician, and every one who had a half-crown backed Lord Liscarroll's Bregog for the Grand National. My cousin, Alice Nagle, with whom I had been a little in love in my boyhood, had married George Crofton, one of my old acquaintances, and lived at Castle Crofton, which was a few miles away on the Doneraile side. The first time I went to see them after my return I found them in the stable yard, which was in perfect repair though the rest of the place was neglected, George regarding with an admiring eye two young horses led by grooms, and Alice in the midst of a miscellaneous pack of at least a dozen dogs. Almost before greeting me she introduced them to

me, made her young deerhounds leap forward and backwards over the yard gate, called attention to the points of the fox-terriers, and offered to sell me the best retriever in Ireland. George, who made more out of his stables than his farming, had a perfect hunter to sell me, and before I left old Mrs. Crofton, who lived with them, expressed a desire to provide me with a wife.

'Now you're back a rich man, Nick,' said she, 'you can take your pick of the girls in the place. There's no one left with any money, and if it were not for the officers at Buttevant settling down on one here and there they'd be all old maids.'

I found it hard to persuade them and others that I had not returned with a fortune. I was glad that I remembered before I left that there was a baby, for its mother had clearly forgotten it. It was produced for my inspection in a dog basket which had been converted into a sort of cradle.

There was some truth in what the old lady said about the lack of husbands for the girls. A good many of the younger men had gone into professions and banks, and their unmarried sisters were at home. There were five Norcott girls at Cloneen, a penniless household where they possessed only one horse, and yet the girls went out hunting regularly. They were the terrors of the farmers round them, and, it was said, went into the yards and took horses off when there was a meet in the neighbourhood. The remaining bachelors were poor, among them my cousin

James Nagle and his two brothers who lived together at Temple Mary. They, like every one else, were surprised at my choice of a residence. 'Whatever made you go live there,' said Jim almost angrily, 'when you might have had Mount Perceval with two hundred acres, or Golden Hill and a sound house over you for as little as you're wasting in stone-cutting on that old lime-kiln, or you might have had Curragh Kerry and kept Sweeny the butcher out of it?—Snugville he calls it now. That's the sort of lad we're getting in the old places. Snugville! He has it painted on the new cement gate piers.' His own front gate was off its hinges. 'Well,' he said as we were parting after having had a conversation about the family and the sale of Ballyquin to Mary, 'I'm right glad to see you back, though I wish you'd made a fortune before you came. Faith, I think there's madness in the family. Your grandfather was a bit queer, and there was our great-uncle Vere: hadn't he all his pockets lined with chamois leather and snuff in every one of them? And yourself!—but you're not so bad as Brian. He's no less than a bloody lunatic.'

There were others beside my cousin who spoke of Brian with disapproval or regret, or even as a man who was disloyal to his own class—an accusation which provoked me to retort that it was better to be disloyal to your class than to your country; but generally I did not trouble to defend him, and indeed I was not sure that I myself approved of the views that he appeared to hold. As no allusion was made to his having

fought in the Boer war, it was evident that this episode in his life was not publicly known.

I looked forward to his return, which was due early in May, with keen pleasure, counting on having him as my first guest and renewing the bonds of our friendship in the old place where we had camped together long ago. The tower rooms, of course, would not be ready, but I had a tent on the plateau beneath it, and in case of bad weather there was always the room in the cottage to sleep in.

The work on the tower progressed slowly, indeed I had no wish to hurry it. There was other building going on all round me in which I was hardly less interested. In the ruined walls jackdaws and starlings, great tits and redstarts were at work, and along the banks of the river and lough the sedge warblers and buntings were making their nests. When my day's duties were done—and with farm and estate work to look after, fairs to attend, and the Ballyquin house to get ready for its new tenants, I was fully occupied—I had all the opportunities I could have desired for my favourite recreation of bird-watching. At no time in my life had I been so near to perfect content as in those hours when after my evening meal I smoked my pipe beneath the tower and listened to a sedge warbler singing in the rushes, or a dipper calling from his perch on a stone in the shallows of the lough, or took my fishing-rod and pushed out the boat when the trout were rising in the twilight. I felt a freedom in those days which I suppose was due to an absence of

any sense of responsibility or obligation to do work which I should have found uncongenial. Such freedom could not be permanent—I had not yet earned it. Freedom, if ever it comes to man, can only be his when he rests after labour, after strife, and beholds accomplishment. Then he may sit for a while in the company of the immortals or of happy children or of birds and animals, watching irresponsibly the work and play of the world.

CHAPTER X

BRIAN

The years had built no barrier between Brian and me: we renewed our intercourse as easily as if it had not been interrupted; we could talk to each other as in our boyhood of ourselves and of intimate things about which men who are not old friends are reticent; indeed we both welcomed a comradeship which was a need, a relationship we neither of us had found elsewhere. In appearance he was less changed than I anticipated. His age was the same as my own, not yet thirty-three, but I had expected him to look older than he did. Perhaps it was the picture I had kept of the dishevelled fellow with a beard whom I had seen among the Boer prisoners that caused my surprise now in finding him so like the Brian of my earlier memories. The thick dark hair, the attractive smile I remembered so well, were the same, and if I saw any change it was that the years had added something to the look of resolution and strength that had always been noticeable.

In the couple of days he spent with me at my tower we had much to review, and political

matters and Brian's public life formed a smaller part of our talk than might have been expected. We were amused to find ourselves resuming our old habit of discussing, as if they were ordinary topics, the great elemental problems of life, and to discover that we were little nearer a solution now than then.

Mrs. Begley, the old friend and foe of our boyhood, the stern moralist who had told us our faults, the ally who had provided us with fugitive meals—Mrs. Begley bridged the years in a sentence when she again saw Brian with me.

'And there ye are,' she said, 'the pair of ye together again. And who knows what divil's mischief ye'll be up to now.'

Boys we still were and would always be to her, and as boys we returned her chaff.

'Don't be troubling yourself about us, Mrs. Begley,' replied Brian, 'for surely you'll be having work enough in keeping an eye on Jamesy. Weren't the girls always fond of him? And they say a man who was a long time a bachelor before he got married is apt to forget he isn't a bachelor afterwards'—a retort which gave us the best of the encounter and brought a grin of furtive satisfaction to the face of the obedient Jamesy, who was standing near.

It was early in June, in that splendour of sunshine following rain that gives to Ireland its days of surpassing beauty. The old place and the country round it had never looked more attractive, and to Brian, who had been but little there during my absence, as well as to myself there was some-

thing at every turn to gladden the heart with a feeling of permanence in the beauty of the scenes we loved best. The grey walls of the ruins stood unchanged on the plateau of short sheep-cropped grass, for the repairs to the tower and the new thatch on the cottage were hardly noticeable innovations. We heard the familiar sound of the wind stirring the rushes and lough sedge, and of the water lapping beneath the tower. We crossed the stepping-stones and looked into the golden brown pools in which we used to bathe, and followed the old footpath to Ballyquin House through ripening meadows which gave us their perennial greeting in the smell of clover and sweet vernal. The great trees that sheltered the house looked friendly in every spreading bough, and in the distance the mountains seemed once more to be the horizon of our world. I saw again the picture I had treasured during the years of absence, and I knew that memory had been faithful and that the scenes of my childhood had become and would for ever remain a part of myself, or I of them.

After inspecting my own domain we walked across to Ballyquin House and fell talking by the way of Mary's purchase of the place. I was anxious to sound Brian's feelings about Mary. I had made up my mind that these two were mates, and also that Trenta Byrne stood more between them than divergent views on politics.

'Do you think she really loves Ireland?' he asked me, 'or just this place and its associations?'

'I think it's in her blood. She says she feels Irish.'

'She is an Imperialist!'

'Perhaps. She wants to see us undivided.'

'It was your influence that made her buy it.'

'Or yours.'

'Mine!' he exclaimed with a slight flush, 'we never spoke of it,' and he went off into a discussion of the economics of farming in Ireland and of the difficulties I had to face in avoiding a loss. 'The only solution,' he said, 'is the small working farmer. When we have our own government we shall buy in and divide the estates.'

'You wouldn't like to see that done here,' I said.

'Not so long as you can go on with your tillage and dairying, and employ as many people on it as by dividing it. I wonder if Mary would consider a co-operative scheme.'

'You might persuade her. I have not much faith in these co-operative schemes. I believe in possession. Without it you lack the interest that brings success.'

'If this place were jointly owned by all the workpeople on it, including yourself, do you tell me your interest in it would not be the same as if you owned it exclusively? Would you love the old trees or the fields less than you do?'

'Of course I would,' I replied. 'A place you love and own, that no one can remove you from, where your son will carry on your work when you are gone, where no one can touch a tree or a wall without your permission, becomes part of yourself.

But I don't think you should own more than your heart can fill.'

'Oh,' he laughed, 'some hearts would be found very large in that capacity at the expense of those who were left with nothing.'

'No. We have quite a limited capacity for real possession,' I persisted; 'for putting ourselves, our love, our work, our responsibility into things outside ourselves. I admit it may be hard to fix the limit, but possession is good. Think of the bit of garden you had here when you were a child and the love you put into it. What should we have cared for a much larger co-operative garden?'

'Yes,' he said, 'it is a primitive instinct, but the world is outgrowing it. It must do so, for there are too many people to allow of possession. I think I have outgrown it. I don't want to possess in the sense you speak of. I would rather help to work a place for a community of people than for myself. I own nothing—nothing, but my possessions are everywhere. This river, these trees, those mountains, are they not mine? As I walk through the country I don't want it to belong to me. I belong to it; the whole of Ireland is my treasury.'

'Mine too,' I said. 'But I have not yet reached your state of evolution. I feel about places as I do about women. I can appreciate any number of them, as you do the scenery, but I must have exclusive privileges in one.'

It was just like old times to be arguing with Brian and to find myself taking the more practical

view. We had come up to the house, and as we entered the yards I enjoyed the look of surprise on Brian's face at the sudden revelation of our activities.

Walls were being repaired, broken roofs re-slated, windows and door frames in the outbuildings renewed, and what made the busy scene so pleasant was the presence of familiar faces. Tom Connors, who had temporarily left my work on the tower, and John Nihil were in the carpenter's shed studying the plan of the cow-stall; in the house there were workmen engaged in patching and painting and cleaning up; in the walled garden old Johnny Roche and a couple of helpers were struggling with the neglected beds. We went the whole round of the place, ending at Uncle de Courcy's workshop, Brian receiving greetings from the younger men in which I noticed a deference not given to myself, probably due to his political standing and quite different in tone from the respectful familiarity of old friends.

A loud guffaw greeted us as we entered the workshop, and then we laughed also. The accumulation of miscellaneous objects around him, pieces of machinery, nails, sheep-dip, paints, and the like, seemed greater than ever. He was happier, I believe, than he had ever been in his life. He may have loved my grandfather in a dog-like way, but his death had given him a sense of freedom he had never known before, the new activity of the place delighted him, and he felt himself a part of it all. He had charge of the stores, and though he kept no books, indeed he

could hardly write, his extraordinarily accurate memory made this almost unnecessary. He was in constant request, fitting farm instruments, doctoring cattle, doing a hundred odd things that needed practical knowledge; and he felt a new importance, for he was actually receiving for his services a salary of two hundred a year, which Mary would have made more if I had allowed it.

'He's a terrible man,' said Uncle de Courcy, indicating me to Brian. 'He had twenty thousand sheep in New Zealand. Twenty thousand!'

'He'll be waking you all up here,' said Brian.

'He will so; and he tells me they'd shear a sheep there under the five minutes.'

'Give me a pipe of your tobacco,' Brian requested, 'till I try is my stomach man enough for it. I never smelt the like yet for strength.'

With great alacrity he produced a piece of black twist and proceeded to cut shavings off it on the bench with a chisel, suddenly pausing in the middle of the operation to ask, 'Where'll I go for a bed, Nick, when the new people come to the house?'

As he was evidently very anxious I told him what I had intended for a surprise later on, that the gamekeeper's cottage, for some time unoccupied, was being put in order for him by Mary's instructions. He seemed satisfied, though by no means elated, and I knew it would pain him to leave the home in which he had spent his whole life.

'You'll have to get a new suit of clothes, Uncle

de Courcy, before they come,' I said. 'They're terrible grand people and three fine daughters and a lady secretary, I hear. For the honour of the family 'twould never do for you to be showing your shirt, or it might be your skin itself, through the back of your breeches.'

He clapped a hand behind him. 'Do you tell me so, Nick?' he exclaimed. 'I'll have a stitch put in them, 'twas this thorny wire destroyed me.'

'Do you know anything of these people who are coming here?' Brian asked me after we had set out homewards. 'I wonder Mary bothered to let the place.'

'I encouraged it,' I answered. 'She couldn't live here at present herself, and I wanted to help to pay for what we're doing and thought it would be a good thing to have the house kept going and fires through the winter. Some day I hope she'll live here. The people? Friends of hers. Colonel Fremington is a politician, a Conservative I think. I met his younger brother, Captain Fremington, at Gibraltar. He was very much *épris* with Mary.'

Brian frowned: he did so whenever Mary's name was mentioned.

'Mary,' said I, 'has the finest mind and the largest heart of any woman I ever knew, and I don't know why the devil it is I'm not in love with her. She is fired by any great cause and she is Irish in sympathy, but she has not made up her mind that ours *is* a great cause. She believes in England as a standard-bearer of

justice and freedom throughout the world. If she realised that England was untrue to her professed principles in opposing Ireland's claim to freedom I believe she would be with us. She is worth winning wholly to our side, and you, if any one, could do it.'

'I think you are mistaken, Nick,' he answered. 'She thinks me a revolutionary and so I am, and I can make no pretence to respect the greedy hypocritical England she puts her faith in. But it *would* be a grand thing to win her over. Nothing angers me so much as this adoption of an English instead of an Irish point of view by Irish families. Her father and her mother both belong to old Irish stock. I can forgive Englishmen preferring what they think Imperial interests to those of Ireland, but I cannot forgive men like Lord Grantry for turning himself and his family into English people.'

'Yes,' I agreed. 'I once heard him say that he was almost ashamed that he was an Irishman. What a fine thing to make his daughter feel ashamed that he should wish to be an Englishman.'

'I don't mind telling you, Nick,' said Brian, 'that I have always been drawn to Mary, loved her perhaps; I felt that she was ready to be my friend, but there was a barrier between us. She and her father are deeply attached to each other and he influences her. If I told her that I had fought in South Africa — her brother was killed, —she would never speak to me again.'

'I should tell her and take the consequences,'

said I. 'If the bond of real comradeship between you is what I think it is, it will stand the test.'

'I believe you are right,' he said, and deliberately changed the subject. 'You were telling me about the new-comers.'

'The Colonel is interested politically in Ireland,' I continued, as if we had made no break in the topic, 'and is going to study us with the help of a lady secretary. His sons and daughters are fond of sport.'

'Oh, don't I know these English who come to study us?' he said contemptuously. 'And then we have a magazine article called "A Fortnight in Connemara," or "Ireland from Within," or an M.P.'s interview in a newspaper giving his experiences; and having heard the views of gillies and allowing himself to be made a fool of by car-drivers my gentleman tells the public that the Irish people are perfectly satisfied, and that the demand for self-government is the work of agitators and priests. Meanwhile the farce goes on at Westminster, but it won't last much longer. You see the change in the people?'

'I do,' I replied. 'They're better off and more dissatisfied than they were. They are more conscious of their strength and have lost some of their fun. The young generation are more independent and have not the good manners of their parents. The democratic spirit has grown here as it has all over the world, but there is a difference—in Ireland it is interwoven with patriotic aspirations as it is nowhere else.'

Brian smiled. 'That makes a strong com-

bination,' he said. 'Democracy may be an ugly thing without an ideal. With one, it is irresistible. The combination is what we are aiming at and achieving. That is why I set so much store on the work of the Gaelic League. I would rather have our own language than our own parliament if I could not have both.'

'If you can keep these ideals undegraded by political expediency and compromise our nationality will be worth fighting for,' I said; 'but will the people accept them? I hate democracy though I accept it as inevitable, and I dislike politicians.'

'I suppose I must appear to you as something of a demagogue, Nick,' said he; 'and I should like you to know what is at the back of my zeal in this Nationalist movement. You remember the great dreams of your youth, the splendid things you wanted to do? Your hero-worship, your eagerness to follow a man you could look up to? You didn't want to make money, you couldn't feel the glow of patriotism for a country whose aims were commercial. You wanted to throw your strength into a brave adventure or help in the reformation of the world. There are thousands of us, tens of thousands in every generation, with ideals we find no means of expressing practically. Self-aggrandisement, expediency, commercial prosperity, these are the aims of the nations' governments. We have in Ireland the desire of something different and we must be free to attempt to achieve it. I am inspired by the hope, the passionate desire of

giving a young generation the means of expressing the best side of themselves in the service of their country, and in getting a government they can honour and feel joy in obeying, one they can look to not to fill their pockets but to fulfil their dreams. And I must admit I feel something amounting to hatred of the self-sufficient well-to-do classes that form the dead weight of obstruction to every attempt at progress that is not material progress. It sounds rather vague and it makes the man of the world laugh; but the best of our young men are ready to make a fight for it, and by God I'll do what I can to give them a chance.'

'I felt rather that way when I cleared out of England,' I said. 'They are a young man's dreams. I wonder if they will capture the heart of Ireland. England is middle-aged. Is Ireland still young? If gaiety is an expression of youth we are much older than we were; and Ireland, in spite of all her wrongs and discomforts, was once a model to the world of lightheartedness, and her songs and books were full of wit. Now our novels and plays are full of tears and tragedy, our newspapers are the dullest things ever printed, our political speeches have no humour, and our long-haired patriotic shop-boys are as solemn as Methodists. With all our ideals we must not forget how to laugh.'

'No, we won't,' he said rather testily. 'I am delighted that our seriousness should be noticeable. We have been regarded by the world too long as a nation of exuberant clowns.'

'But I am with you in your hopes,' I added as a correction to my cynicism.

'We have a long way to go,' he continued after a pause. 'England never yields anything to Ireland except by compulsion. Our young men are ready to die for their cause, and the sacrifice may be necessary before England will believe we are determined, and before Ireland will be awakened to a full faith in her destiny and make the final fight for freedom!'

'Good God! man,' I cried. 'Do you mean another rebellion?'

'I do,' he replied.

So we left the subject for the time, and I felt that I had been expressing opinions while he had been making a confession of faith.

Brian was my first guest, and I a proud host as I took him round my little domain. In spite of his deprecation of possessions I think he was almost envious when he saw the rooms in the tower, and the fact that the work was being done by John Nihil and Tom Connors doubled his interest in it.

'And wait till you see those shelves filled,' I said.

In my mind's eye I was picturing the light falling through the mullions of the great window on the autumnal hues of mellow calf and morocco. Brian was looking back not onward.

'And here,' he said, 'we had our secret lair; here we roasted stares and tried to eat them; here we were outlaws in hiding and more than once we risked a licking and slept on a bed of hay.'

I gave Brian my little room in the cottage with an alternative of a tent on the river-bank; for myself I had fixed up a camp-bed on the roof of the tower, having acquired in New Zealand the habit of sleeping out of doors. I could see that Brian was thoroughly pleased with my establishment, and also a little surprised at some of its arrangements, especially when he saw my wine cellar, which I had made in the columbarium, using the lower ledges as bins. What little wine I had there came from my grandfather's stock, and this enabled me to produce a bottle of Chateau la Rose and one of 1887 port for dinner in honour of the occasion of Brian's visit.

Mrs. Begley gave us a particularly nice dinner, but I don't think Brian was aware of it. Perhaps he would have noticed if it had been bad, but if he had properly appreciated the grilled trout, the young chickens, and Johnny Roche's asparagus he would have made some comment. As to the Chateau la Rose I believe he would have preferred tea, which I found was his usual drink, but in celebration of our meeting he duly honoured my cellar, and after a couple of glasses of the 1887 port became very happy, and seemed for a short time to have forgotten all about the wrongs of Ireland and of humanity and the necessity for 'setting the crooked straight'. I too fell into a mood of great content, and my thoughts about my fellow-creatures, especially those of the other sex, grew wondrous kind. Brian refused a third glass of port and lighted his pipe. I refilled my glass and contemplated the glowing gules which

the light of the setting sun cast through it on the white table-cloth.

'And we're both bachelors still,' I remarked, 'and we are in a strong position in having arrived at an age of sound judgement before making our choice.'

'You may wait too long,' said Brian. 'I knew a man who wanted to have a motor car and he postponed year after year, always in expectation of improved designs and cheaper price. He still drives an ass cart.'

'There,' said I, 'you are confusing the object to be acquired with the person who desires it. I am not waiting for improvement in women, but claim sounder judgement in selection.'

'It's all nonsense,' he replied. 'We never use judgement about these things. We fall in love.'

'When we were young men we were constantly falling in love, and how thankful we now are that we didn't marry one of the ladies.'

'If we had been enough in love we probably should have married, and probably have done right. No, I think our position gets weaker, not stronger. Every year we become less capable of a generous, unselfish attachment to a woman for herself and think more of the qualities in her that would suit our own particular tastes and weaknesses.'

'Do you remember Annette?' I asked him.

'Annette,' he mused. 'No, I'm afraid I do not.'

'Perhaps you never knew her name,' I said; 'and indeed I have forgotten the other one's name, which, of course, you cherish. You remember,

in our tramp in Somersetshire, the two girls with the bicycles?'

'Helen! Miss Hartley. Rather!' he exclaimed.

'Of course. Well, Annette was my friend,' I said; 'she was a dear girl. I'm in love with her memory still.'

He asked with interest if I had heard anything of them since, and I told him we had exchanged a few letters and finally lost sight of each other. I remembered that I still kept a lock of her hair, but I did not tell him that. I said I felt sure she must have married a chemist. We laughed, perhaps with a touch of sadness, at the end of a boyish romance and the memory of the impressionable days when we could take without hesitation the casual adventures of the road. I think we both desired to find out how far the other's youthful faiths and dreams had survived a contact with the world.

'Once upon a time,' said Brian, 'you believed that there was a girl somewhere in the world that you could love beyond all others, and that you would find her. Do you believe so still?'

'Of course not,' I laughed. 'There are hundreds that would do almost equally well.'

'I suppose I am a fatalist,' he said. 'I seem to believe in that one, but you may or may not find her—or win her: that depends on yourself and the road you take. You must be true to love if you would reach its goal.'

'Any one of hundreds of congenial women would do,' I repeated; 'and if you are true to

your dreams and to her she becomes your true love. A man and his wife are not ready-made mates; they create each other. In that sense I believe there is one woman for a man, and only one.'

'At all events,' he said, 'we both believe that our own conduct counts in this as it does in everything. I ought not therefore to have said I was a fatalist. I should rather have said that there is for each of us a solution of his aims, a fulfilment of his life, of his love, and that its accomplishment depends on his own conduct and—and on the mercy of God.'

'There we come back to faith,' said I, 'which is something more than fatalism. You have more faith than I.'

After a short silence he said, 'That scene we saw in the underworld in London,—that market of women. You remember the girl that put herself up for auction. The whole thing sickened us. We are no longer boys, but I hope we have not lost the feeling of chivalry we had for women, —that is our feeling of obligation to protect them, never to take advantage of their weakness.'

'Some of them are ready enough to take advantage of ours. Some of us need protection.'

'Yes, from ourselves,' he went on with growing warmth. 'Sex attraction is a damnable tyranny. Love bridles and guides it and can make it the finest thing we know, but in itself it is a madness. I have seen good men untrue to every principle and faith they held under its influence; and which of us can be sure that he may not be caught in the fire?'

'I suppose it gets less likely every year,' I replied. 'As we get older we "outgrow our troublesome desires", as Stevenson said.'

'You are less inflammable as you get older,' Brian said, 'but if you catch fire you are harder to put out; but really, I am no fatalist; we have the power of choice. It may be a simple thing, a test of our physical courage; or it may be a big thing, an occasion when we know that what we want to do is wrong. It is in these tests, possibly only in these tests, that a man has any right to claim the possession of a soul of his own. All the rest of him is the creation of circumstances and inherited inclinations.'

'It can be argued,' I commented, 'that even in these moments of choice your will is not your own, but is an inherited inclination. But really, every theory of philosophy, every assertion of religion leaves me incredulous. The only definite belief I have is, that those people who have faith are nearer to the truth than those who have not. I expect Mrs. Begley's reading of life is nearer the truth than that of Nietzsche.'

I was less interested at the moment in the immediate subject of discussion than in the intensity of feeling with which Brian had spoken of the ordeal to which a man was subjected by the attraction of sex. I believed that he was speaking from personal experience, and leapt to the conclusion that Trenta Byrne was the woman. The entrance of Mrs. Begley with coffee ended a conversation which was becoming rather deeper than I liked immediately after dinner, and I was

not sorry when Brian suggested that we should go out and smoke in the open air.

As I had much to tell Brian of my adventures abroad, and much to hear from him of his own life since the time of our meeting in South Africa, it was late that night before we went to our beds, his in the tent by the river-bank, mine on the roof of the tower open to the stars. A golden morrow greeted us, and we began our new day, as we so often had done in our boyhood, with a swim in the river among the coots and reeds and water-lilies. The post brought me a letter from Mary suggesting a date for my promised visit to Grantry. 'I shall be very interested in hearing of your meeting with Brian,' she said, 'and what you think of him after all these years. I am sure he will be as glad as I was to find you the same dear creature you always were. If he would care to come over with you, tell him I am as anxious as ever to make him friendly to England and to show him I am a good Irish woman, and that he would have a welcome.' I passed the letter to Brian and he read it and returned it with a smile, making no comment; but afterwards, when I was writing to Mary and asked what reply I should make for him, he inquired when I was going, and told me to thank her and say it was probable he might be staying with the Merthyrs at Mine Ferry while I was at Grantry, and if so would come over and see her.

CHAPTER XI

JERRY HOOK

MINE FERRY looked to me even meaner than the picture my memory had kept of the place, and the fineness of the summer evening emphasised the glare of its red brick streets and the grime of its prosperity. I saw little change: the slag heaps, the chimney stacks, the great black cylinders of the gas works, the public-houses, the Wesleyan chapel, the rows of workman's cottages still offended the eye; the same depressing smells from glue works or soap works or river mud assailed the nose, and brought back forgotten hours of my days of imprisonment.

'Isn't it a beastly world?' said Jerry Hook, with whom I was walking to the station after a visit to the Falcons' works.

A coal cart was passing us on the road, followed by some children who were picking up the small lumps which occasionally fell off or which they managed to knock off themselves; bands of girls from the soap factory, where there was a strike, came along arm-in-arm singing American nigger songs in nasal accents; working-men belonging

to night shifts were smoking at their doorways half-dressed; a lady, obviously on the point of adding to the population, stood in the middle of the road with her hands on her hips abusing her retreating husband in trumpet tones. I heard from Jerry that the Merthyrs were still living in those surroundings, working as zealously as ever. 'They have a flower garden in the country, to which they take picnic parties from the desert—it's their only dissipation.' He spoke of them with sincere admiration, as did Brian. When Christianity is really put into practice it amazes us.

At the works and in the office everything had seemed to me to be going on exactly as when I left,—machines and men,—machines that were almost intelligent, men that were almost machines. In the office the same clerks were making out invoices and adding up columns of figures. Mr. Fish was still dealing with bills of lading, and Mr. Delcreedy guarding the private ledgers; a few young men whom I remembered had grown middle-aged; a few of those I looked for were absent.

At the railway station it interested me to see so many familiar figures on the platform waiting for the train to Grantry. Bullmans, Podsons, and Clarence-Perkses, a little stouter and more prosperous looking, some of them accompanied by sons wearing Norfolk jackets and knicker-bockers, who had consented to enter the family businesses and spoke with a new fashion of accent acquired at public schools, in marked contrast to the provincial speech of their parents. Old Charles Hedges, my naturalist friend with whom

I had already had some talk, came along laden with brown-paper parcels, and looking very happy and very shabby. 'See whether he buys illustrated papers,' said Jerry. 'Yes; that shows that he's been having a drink or two. He's doing just what he did ten years ago: goes to business by the morning train, takes his scrap-book with him, writes part of an article on the chiff-chaff or the water-rail for a newspaper, goes out to earn one-and-sixpence as a commissioner of oaths—that's his only legal work—leaves a notice on the door—"Back in twenty minutes"—and then goes home bird-nesting or pasting things into his scrap-book. Here, Charles!' he exclaimed, as Hedges came over from the bookstall. 'Has Quin heard that poem of yours on the chiff-chaff? Hush!

> The little chiff-chaff chiffs all day,
> He chiffs when morning light is grey,
> He chiffs, he chaffs, at work and play:
> It is the little chiff-chaff's way.

I'm afraid I can't remember the rest of it.'

'Oh, shut up,' said old Charles, his cheek twitching and his eye blinking. 'Don't believe him, Quin, he made it up himself. He's always pulling our legs. I don't mind a bit, but some of 'em do. As old Weg Willows was saying at lunch——'

The train was starting and we jumped into a first-class carriage that was already full of season-ticket holders who eyed us, and our friend with his brown-paper parcels whom they knew had a third-class ticket, with no sign of welcome.

I saw faces that I recognised: a couple of Bullmans, a Podson, a Clarence-Perks, Mr. Goldney Flake, whom I remembered for his reputation for great wealth and greater meanness, and one or two others who were strangers to me.

'Good-evening, Mr. Podson. Good-evening, Bullman,' said Jerry, squeezing into a seat, after helping Charles Hedges to stow his parcels on the rack over Mr. Goldney Flake's head. 'You remember Quin?' he said. And 'Where are you living now?' I was asked; and 'Ireland's a funny place,' remarked a Bullman very solemnly.

Mr. Patchway, a town councillor of Mine Ferry, who I gathered had recently come to the neighbourhood, complained of the lateness of the season. His ducklings had been ready to kill six weeks ago, and he had not yet a supply of green peas; ''ard lines, I call it,' he said in a tone of deep pathos, ''ard lines'; and Mr. Clarence-Perks's smile showed that he at all events had not failed to notice the escape of the H.

'I saw your brother's flag flying this morning,' said Jerry to a Bullman; 'what was the occasion? St. George's Day? No, that's past. A royal accouchement? The Grantry cavey show? He'll have to give up that flag soon. Quin and his friends are going to have Home Rule, and then, of course, the Union Jack will have no meaning.'

'Some people,' said Mr. Cromwell Bullman very slowly, 'change their flags. Others don't.'

'Hullo!' several of us cried.

'A bit of fish for Pansy,' explained Charles

Hedges, retrieving one of the parcels which had fallen off the rack and hit Mr. Goldney Flake in its descent. 'Very sorry, Mr. Flake.'

'The way they crowd these first-class carriages is a scandal,' said that gentleman. 'The comfort of the season-ticket holder is quite neglected. I shall make a point of seeing the chairman about it.'

'Quite right, sir,' said Jerry; 'you are paying for the sixth part of a compartment and only getting a ninth. We want influential people like you to look after our rights. What was it old Weg Willows was saying at lunch?' he asked Charles.

'Or I shall give up my season-ticket and motor or ride on horseback,' continued Mr. Flake.

'I see you still ride into town sometimes, Mr. Flake,' Jerry said agreeably. 'Doctor's recommendation? and a very good thing for the liver. Now where, if I may ask, do you put up your horse? Oh, the *White Lion*. I hope you examine your bills very closely.'

By this time every one was listening, clearly to the stimulation of Jerry, who liked an audience when he was exercising his wit on a victim.

'My bills! Why do you ask?' said Mr. Flake anxiously. 'Do you think they overcharge?'

'I have grave suspicions,' said Jerry.

'I have my suspicions too,' said Mr. Flake nervously. 'Well, here's one of the bills. Look at it yourself.'

Jerry examined the document with a severe countenance.

'No,' he murmured, 'it is *not* fair to you. It is because they think you're wealthy and can afford it.'

'Well!' exclaimed Mr. Flake.

'Your horse remains in the stable several hours during the day?' Jerry inquired.

'Yes, of course.'

'Well,' he said, 'there is a serious omission. They have not given you credit for your horse's droppings. They of course belong to you. The manure has a definite value.'

'Do you mean to say,' cried Mr. Flake, 'that it is usual to take this into account?'

'Of course it is, sir,' replied Jerry indignantly. 'Is it not so?' he appealed to us all. 'It's a regular thing. They are taking advantage of your simplicity; they think you never saw a cost sheet, or else they think you are such a rich man that you don't trouble about these little business details. It is a positive fraud. I say with all seriousness that they have no right whatever to the unearned excrement.'

Old Charles Hedges had a fit of choking, and if Mr. Goldney Flake had looked round the carriage he would have found the faces of his fellow-travellers enlightening; but he was touched on his weakest spot, the fear that he might be thought wanting in business acumen, and was being overcharged because he was rich, and he angrily declared that he would demand a refund.

'And if it is refused,' said Jerry, 'I recommend

your exposing the whole affair in a letter to the newspapers.'

We were pulling up at Grantry station and we all turned out of the carriage to relieve ourselves of suppressed laughter.

'By Jove! I must tell that to old Weg Willows and Bob Price,' Charles blurted out. 'It's worth paying the extra fare to travel with old Jerry Hook and the mandarins.'

There were one or two motor cars among the carriages awaiting the arrival of the train, otherwise the scene was much the same as I remembered it, evening after evening, years before. Some contours may have become rounder, some pockets fuller, Charles Hedges a little shabbier, Jerry's tongue a little sharper, but it was the same world; and it was strange to think that its daily routine had been going on without a pause, and that each of these people had been with himself all the time. In the village there was some alteration: its picturesque cottages with their old-fashioned gardens were unspoilt, the benches remained in front of the inn, the pump was in its old place, but there were increasing signs of the intrusion of the town. More new villas had been built, motor omnibuses nearly as wide as the street drove lighter vehicles out of their way, the old carriers' carts had disappeared, motor cars had made the hedges white with the dust they raised. In a few years the place would become an adjunct of the town, the red brick streets would come farther along the road from Mine Ferry advancing with the

tram lines, the motor traffic would increase, there would be a Cinema House opposite the church. And this was going on throughout England; its country-side would be but patches of garden and recreation ground within its network of towns. I thought of our unspoilt country in Ireland, but also remembered that we had to emigrate our young people. Would Brian and his fellow-dreamers find support in their plans of co-operation and rural industries and succeed in keeping our people in the land without the curse of modern industrialism? Could the work of a handful of idealists stand against the economic forces of the world?

I had been Jerry's guest at Grantry for a couple of days. There was a friendship, different indeed from my familiar intimacy with Brian, but very real, between us. He looked thinner, more worn and dyspeptic, but little older, for he had always looked elderly, than when I saw him last. Clara told me he hated his business life more than ever. 'He has stuck to it chiefly for the sake of mother and me, to make us comfortable,' she said; 'and after working all day at the office he sits up half the night writing poetry. How can he be well? What he's looking forward to is being able to save enough to retire and live in a cottage near a stream where he can fish and have time for his literary work.'

'Yes, it's a pity,' I said, 'that a man with his gifts should have to spend his energies on work that others could do equally well, but a good

income has its compensations. I cannot picture Jerry in mean surroundings or doing hack literary work and living in lodgings, with a maid of all work, instead of in this cottage with its delightful garden and nice bits of old furniture, and a library from which he can take down a first edition, and a cellar from which he can bring up a first growth to a fastidious friend.'

'Of course he's clever in business too,' she said. 'Lord Grantry would not have given him his position otherwise, and I believe he'd be higher up in the business if it was not for his tongue. I heard that he offended Lord Grantry at a Board meeting when a resolution was passed giving a bonus to the staff after a good year. It was ridiculously small, Jerry thought, and he said, "Don't you think, sir, it might be called a skin-and-bonus?" He cannot help saying a smart thing even to the people he ought to be careful with.'

She showed by her tone that she appreciated her brother's wit more than she deprecated his lack of prudence.

Though Mary Falcon had not been very serious when she said she believed Clara was waiting to have another look at me before she decided whether or not to accept the minor canon, it was pleasant to know I was remembered, and I had looked forward myself to having another look at *her*. I cannot tell what she thought of me, though her welcome was very cordial; and indeed, I hardly know what I thought of her, except that I found her company agreeable and stimulating. She was rather demure-looking, with a pale face,

good features, and dark affectionate eyes—better looking, I thought, now than when she was ten years younger,—and she was refined, cultivated, and sympathetic. Why was I unkindled? Was it the absence in her of that quality of sex, that subtle message, that signal of invitation in face and form which give to a woman her supreme power of attraction? 'Warm in friendship, cool in love,' I pronounced her; and yet perhaps I was wrong, perhaps it was that she, too, needed kindling, and I had not proved equal to the occasion. I felt a little ashamed of the Cœlebs-in-Search-of-a-Wife way in which I studied her as a possible companion for life, not forgetting that she had never given me the least reason to suppose that I would be acceptable as a husband.

The Hooks lived in one of those nice old-fashioned houses that they call cottages in English villages. It had a good garden and well-kept lawn, and as a visitor I found it a very pleasant place, though if I had had to live there it would have seemed like a bird-cage. The Hooks seemed to regard it as a place to live in rather than a home, and their friends were not the people of the neighbourhood. At dinner on the evening after my visit to Mine Ferry Jerry entertained me with little biographical sketches of people I had known when I lived there, his mother and sister protesting against his exaggerations, but evidently enjoying them. The lamps were lit, but it was still daylight; the casement windows opened to the ground, and the carpet of the room and the grass of the lawn seemed to meet. Over Mrs.

Hook's head a presentation portrait of the deceased canon, her husband, smiled calmly. His family was rather 'highly strung', and though the three were great friends, they showed a tendency to irritation with each other in unexpected ways, which the canon's smile seemed to reprove.

'You must not go by what Jerry says about our neighbours, Mr. Quin,' said Mrs. Hook; 'they are really very nice people.'

'I just say the things mother would like to say but thinks unchristian,' he explained to me.

'But he gets us into trouble, poor mother especially,' said Clara. 'Jerry put it about that Mrs. Eric Podson made her husband's trousers—of course he dresses very badly—and mother believed it and thought it so much to her credit, as they have no children and she has plenty of time, that she actually complimented her on her cleverness in tailoring. She has not called since.'

'I know,' said the old lady, 'it was most embarrassing for me when she said, "Pray who was your informant?" And then you remember about Dotty Henbury.'

Jerry laughed. 'We christened her Dotty; her real name is Kathleen.'

'Of course she's not really an idiot, only backward,' said Clara; 'perhaps just funny enough to make her parents sensitive, but we always called her Dotty, and mother thought it was a pet name, and one day when she was calling she said, "Oh, here comes Dotty." "*Kathleen*," Mrs. Henbury corrected her severely, "Kathleen, if you wouldn't mind, *she'd rather*." Jerry's nicknames are dread-

ful. There's Peony Brown; his face is just like a peony but his name is James. I might have written it on an invitation to tennis. Do try not to shake the pepper all over the table, Jerry. You're making poor Mr. Quin sneeze.'

'And tell me,' I asked, 'do the Bullmans still live by clockwork? Do they go and come by the same trains? Do they put away their croquet mallets and bows and arrows and get out their golf clubs on a fixed date? Does Mrs. Cobden Bullman have a baby every spring?'

'On the second Monday after Epiphany,' replied Jerry.

'Jerry, you know it's three years since the last,' said Mrs. Hook.

'And does Mr. Wilberforce Bullman——?'

'Sir Wilberforce now,' the old lady corrected me.

'Does he still start cutting his hay on the twenty-first of June regardless of the season?'

'He does,' replied Jerry; 'and the Bullman family still has its cricket matches and its summer show with competitions for the best fowls and fruit and vegetables. They have the records for years, and have printed a book containing them, and just as racing men say "that was the year of Galtee More's Derby or Manifesto's Grand National" they say "that was the year our Cromwell won the onions" or "Smiles took the marrow prize."'

'I remember "our Crom,"' said I, 'and Tupper. Does he still sow his wild oats? Is Livingston still a bachelor?'

'Yes,' said Jerry, 'and solemner than ever. He lives in the same house facing the road.'

'Hilda, you may leave the room and return when we ring,' said Mrs. Hook to the parlour-maid. 'How often have I asked you, Jerry, not to speak about our neighbours when the maids are in the room? They repeat everything.'

'Well, now they've gone you must tell Nick what Livingston said to you about the production of your last volume,' Clara said to Jerry.

'"Now, Hook,"' he related, making an excellent imitation of the Bullman speech, "I want you to tell me if you make much money out of those books of poetry you write." "I'm afraid not," says I. "*I thought not*," says Livingston after a pause.'

'They're delightful people,' I laughed, 'but the poor poets don't get much support from them.'

'None since Shakespeare,' Jerry replied. 'They read Shakespeare and Jorrocks. I like them immensely. They're a good, sound, independent lot and make no pretence. They won't move, they won't change; they build walls round themselves as they do round their gardens. Really they and people like them are very valuable to England. They are splendid ballast. They never lead, but they are seldom misled. They know what is good for the Bullman family, and have decided that what is good for them is good for the nation.'

'Well, I'm sure you've heard quite enough of our neighbours,' Clara said. I noticed a look of

pain simultaneously come to her face and Jerry's. This seemed to be caused by the remarkable sounds their mother made in eating some very dry toast. To a person like myself with no nerves or fads some of their ways seemed very funny.

'They're all quite satisfied with themselves and a little sorry for their neighbours,' Clara continued, 'just as we are. Almost every one is. You'll see another sample of English people to-morrow night at Grantry Park who are even more satisfied with themselves.'

'I wish you were going to be there to make me feel comfortable,' I said. 'I know nothing about English society. I shall be shy.'

'An Irishman shy indeed,' she exclaimed.

'I never felt at ease with Mr. Falcon,' I rejoined. 'He always made me feel I had done something wrong when I came near him.'

'You probably had,' said Jerry.

'And Mary?' Clara asked.

'Oh, she and I are real friends,' I answered.

'Well, you're privileged,' said Jerry. 'She's friendly to every one, but it's the friendliness of a queen. You are expected to look up to her and you do, because she's so beautiful. She's always absorbed by some new idea — woman's rights, religion, art, the Empire, and now I understand she's discovered she's Irish and has become a Nationalist.'

'Yes,' I laughed, 'she's progressive.'

'And isn't it strange she is not married?' said Jerry. 'I suppose an individual would hardly satisfy her. She's like Mrs. Siddons, who, some

one said, could be satisfied with nothing less than the East India Company.'

Clara laughed appreciatively. There was nothing I could take exception to in the criticism of Mary. I might have said the same things myself, but I detected a suggestion of hostility in the tone which displeased me.

'And there's Richard,' said Mrs. Hook, 'not married either, and it is important he should be as he's the heir to the peerage, but people don't seem to marry as young as they used to. I was only nineteen. And there's not only Mary and Richard Falcon, but Jerry and Clara and yourself, Mr. Quin, and John—I do hope John will come home for a wife. You tell me there's a chance of a visit from him next year. Just think of it, fifteen years since I saw him. You can understand what that means to a mother.'

'Do you think we shall like him?' asked Clara.

'My dear, your brother!' exclaimed Mrs. Hook. 'Have you no natural feelings?'

Our talk drifted to New Zealand, and I gave them further details of our daily life and descriptions of our neighbours on the station until we had finished our coffee and the ladies left us.

'Now,' said Jerry, after we had lit our pipes, 'I want to hear how it all strikes you after a dozen years. You come back to it with a fresh eye and notice what we pass over. Is there movement, change, improvement, real progress?'

It was a question that interested me. 'In Ireland,' I replied, 'I noticed a change, a change

of spirit. In England none. England seems to have spread, not to have moved on. You have more people, more money. The working-classes seem to be better off. You have more excursions, more football, more betting on races. The roads are full of motor traffic, every wall is plastered with advertisements of cigarettes and whisky, but I have not seen a drunken man. The newspapers have become more vulgar and the books and magazines sold at the book-stalls more idiotic. The girls wear better boots and pull up their stockings. Every one has a telephone or a gramophone. Fewer people go to church. I see no change of spirit, no new ideal, no particular national aim.'

'Mildew,' said Jerry; 'and what about your Ireland?'

'Discontent,' I replied, 'and revolt not only against English rule but against those who have been our representatives in Parliament. While I was away a young generation has arisen for whom the love of Ireland means something more than patriotism: it is a sort of religion. Our class has missed its chance and lost its influence; the politicians, the official Nationalists, are discredited. There is a new movement, a new spirit. Brian is one of its leaders.'

'Well,' said Jerry, 'I'm not surprised to hear that you've grown tired of that third-rate, half-educated, ill-mannered crowd of publicans and attorneys you send to Westminster; but I haven't much belief in your idealists, they're merely socialists. Brian Barry's honest, I am sure, but

most of them are humbugs. I have read some of their speeches, and they seem to combine intense vainglory and belief in the superiority of the Irish race over all others with envy and hatred and malice and all uncharitableness. Hatred of England first, and then hatred of the class above them. They're most of them shop assistants and village schoolmasters, I believe. It's just a class asserting itself and concealing its grievances in the name of Patriotism. We have the same people here, but they're swamped by the numbers of the better-paid working men and the rich middle classes. Your patriots get their money and inspiration from America, and if Home Rule comes you'll have Tammany Hall in Dublin in twelve months.'

'A speech to win the applause of a Bullman,' I said. 'It just shows how unfit England is to govern Ireland when one of her most intelligent citizens, like yourself, shows such complete ignorance of the country.'

'And then when you get Home Rule,' continued Jerry, ignoring my comments, 'you'll quarrel among yourselves; and without England to keep the ring each side will hit below the belt as you have always done against England. "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity." What a sentiment for an idealist! but it's an Irish patriot's idea of the way to give a knock-out blow.'

'As to a blow beneath the belt'—I spoke with some warmth—'if your opponent is so big that you can't reach higher than his belly, his belly is the only place to hit.'

Jerry laughed. 'Don't be offended. I'll come over and make some observations. Really I'm out of place in this modern confused democratic world. I hate it and all its ways. Self-assertion, vulgarity, no repose; everywhere something that jars.'

I took up the rôle of admonisher.

'There's a fear,' I said, 'of the springs of human kindness being chilled by giving our superficial dislikes their head. I think I dislike most of the things you dislike, but I have made up my mind to laugh at them and not let them disturb me.'

'You think I'm becoming bitter,' said Jerry. 'I'm afraid I know it. It may be partly my liver. That's one of the rotten things about life, the domination of the material. I am hag-ridden with headaches, dyspepsia, things that make me contemptible to myself and which no effort of my own can throw off. The machinery is abominable. I am like a man trying to compose music on an instrument that is out of tune. I hate the machinery, and the worst of it all is a fear I sometimes have that I and the machinery are all one. If I really believed that, I should wish to be out of it and curse God and die; but I go on with a sort of determination not to let the physical conquer me, like a skipper who sets himself to handle an unseaworthy ship and bring his cargo into port.'

He spoke with intensity, and I saw that he had expressed pent-up feelings and had given me an insight into the secret places of his heart.

'The pride of seamanship,' I said; 'that's your real self.'

He grinned in his comical way and relighted his pipe, which had gone out while he was speaking. 'I don't usually talk about my ills,' he continued, 'and I won't again; but I must say I resent the domination of the physical, the fact that a ridiculous thing like indigestion can destroy a man's outlook and rob the world of its beauty; that a bottle of wine can fill me with a temporary Christian charity, or make another man the father of an illegitimate child. I wish I could join you in that bottle, but it would only make me cantankerous to-morrow. And look at the futility of our lives, the lives of nations: no improvement in spite of two thousand years of Christianity. The world does not move onward; it merely spreads, as you say.'

I put a more hopeful view. 'The best men are always showing us the right way, Jerry, the way onward. There's the ship to be handled, a port to steer for, any way; and the best thing that can happen to any man is to be putting his strength into some work that he feels is helping the world. That is where people like Brian who have a national ideal, and people like the Merthyrs who have a Christian ideal before them, live on higher levels than you and I.'

'I don't question their sincerity,' said Jerry; 'but how can you expect me, for instance, to share their faiths? Honestly, do *you* share them?'

'Only half-heartedly,' I replied. 'We must each make his own faith, and that is only to be

done by work. What I feel is that I am not doing enough. I am too contented with my surroundings, watching the birds and entering into the life of the seasons. My daily work is congenial. Yours in these modern commercial surroundings is not.'

'But your wild creatures,' he objected; 'I am afraid the study of them would depress me. As far as I know they are always escaping from each other when they are not escaping from man. It is the low cunning and cruelty in the scheme of things that troubles me; one thing devouring another for its own preservation, and man the greediest and cruellest of all the creatures. My moment of keenest enjoyment is a fish's moment of greatest horror. What you call Nature sets us an abominable example.'

'Both good and bad,' said I. 'We can make our choice.'

'Can we? And do you think there is a purpose that transcends Nature's?'

'Where does your contempt for life's injustice, your hatred of Nature's cruelty, come from?' I asked.

'That's my only comfort,' said Jerry. 'It's a bad, mean world and Nature has no chivalry, but the comfort is we don't approve of it. If we acquiesced, creation would stand condemned, but we have seen a vision of something better.' He opened the door; Clara had begun to play the piano in the next room. 'But the cruelty,' he murmured, 'even among your birds.'

'They sing in spite of it,' I said, 'and their

songs seem to have some happy fountain spring. You sing too, in spite of all that's wrong, and your poems have added something to the beauty of the world.'

He looked pleased, but said nothing. We were silent, listening. The music was Beethoven's: it seemed to reach the heart without trifling with the emotions, to bear in its ordered movement a message of fulfilment. Through the great arts, through poetry and music and painting and architecture, was left to man the work of continuing the creation. All other work is but the discovery or manipulation of what is already created, but in art a new thing is born. The divine within man touches the clay or the string or the word, and we are shown a beauty that was not here before.

The music ended, Jerry remained silent, and I went out into the garden. From the high-road came the sound of passing vehicles and the shouted choruses of their occupants; in the east the sky glowed dusky red above the furnaces of Mine Ferry; a railway whistle sounded in the distance. The spell of the music had vanished. The stars that shone over the valley looked almost as if they belonged to the Bullmans.

CHAPTER XII

MARY AND BRIAN

Grantry Park, like so many great English residences, gave you an impression of entrenchment against the world. My life in the colonies and in Ireland had made me forget that there were places where *trespassers will be prosecuted*, or fields through which you were not allowed to walk; and the high wall round the park and the large iron gates that opened only to the lever of the lodge-keeper made your entrance a formal instead of a friendly thing.

Within the gates the order was oppressive, and everything—the tame deer, the model farm buildings, the pedigree herd of shorthorns—told of lands that were not earning their living, but were supported by the owner's collieries or iron-works. The house itself, while possessing every sort of comfort and convenience, seemed to me unhomely. There was fine old furniture in the spacious rooms, and pictures and books were not wanting, for Lord Grantry had cultivated a taste for valuable things; but you felt that the sets of chairs must have been entered in some furniture

pedigree stock-book, and the first editions locked behind iron grills in the library cases defied the intrusion of a reader as the park walls defied the public. The whole place was marked with the personality and taste of Lord Grantry, unmodified even by Mary's influence which I expected to have found.

Lady Grantry was the only member of the family at home when I arrived, and after a cordial welcome she took me out on to the terrace, where two footmen in livery, one bearing a table, the other a tray, brought us our tea.

'We won't wait for the others,' she said; 'they're walking or driving somewhere, and till they come we can have a nice little family gossip.'

She looked a very happy woman, and if the years had stolen her youthful charms they had done it so gracefully that you hardly noticed the theft.

'Of course,' she continued, 'I've heard a great deal about you from Mary. She says you're very reliable.'

This made me laugh, and my hostess laughed too. I found she was very ready to laugh, a trait which often makes a dull conversation really pleasant.

'And have you seen Dick yet?' she asked.

'Not for ten years,' I replied.

'I'm afraid you'll think him too fat,' she said musingly. 'He's too contented and comfortable, so unlike Mary, who's always doing too much; and I suppose that's why he won't look out for

a wife. Of course it's his duty to do so as the heir to the place. Isn't it?'

'Of course it is,' I said, with feigned indignation.

'And you must tell him so. We're always showing him nice girls too—pretty ones and sporting ones and clever friends of Mary's, botanists, you know, and all that, and he never gets beyond the friendly stage, though he did let one of them shave him with a safety razor in the gun-room.'

'What about a sea voyage?' I suggested. 'That's the thing to make matches. There are ladies on every ship who go to sea with this in view.' I quoted a Limerick which a passenger had made on our voyage home:

> When a Britisher crosses the sea,
> If the Britisher's sex is a she,
> She is seeking for Love
> And returns like the dove
> With an olive branch—perched on her knee.

'Poor Dick,' she laughed. 'I can see him taking refuge in the engine-room from the designing creatures and getting his white trousers all over grease. What a strange coincidence that you should have met Mary on the voyage. Now doesn't it strike you as very strange,' she spoke in a very confidential tone, 'that Mary is not married?'

I said she might have had almost any one she liked but that she was probably hard to please.

'But really nice men have wanted to marry her and there is always some one on the scene. Only to-day Captain Fremington, the brother of our friend who is staying here, the man who has taken Ballyquin, you know, appeared on a bicycle. His ship put in somewhere on the coast and he was only able to get away for a few hours. It was a motor bicycle he came on. I was really sorry for the poor man, and he looked so disappointed because Mary was out that I asked him to stay the night. He will have to leave at six o'clock in the morning, but sailors have a great sense of duty.'

We spoke of Colonel Fremington and the preparations at Ballyquin, and Lady Grantry's tone again became confidential. 'I want to ask you about this purchase of Mary's,' she said. 'I remember the place so well when I was a girl and we used to come down from Dublin thirty, thirty-five years ago. Now why did she buy it?'

'She was always extremely fond of it,' I answered, 'and it's an old family place. It will give employment and do an immense amount of good in the neighbourhood.'

'But she can't live there by herself. Her father tried to dissuade her from buying it, but no! You know what Mary is when she has made up her mind.'

I agreed that she had decided views and a way of carrying them out.

'Yes, of making them seem right however ridiculous they are,' said Lady Grantry. 'Even

her father assents to her doing things he would not tolerate in any one else. They are wonderful friends. But just think of some of her freaks—that suffragette nonsense, and then becoming a Roman Catholic. I admit that that was a great trial to me; we were always brought up to distrust the Church of Rome. And then her views about money make me feel so uncomfortable, as if it does not really belong to you; and she overdoes her work among the poor people. She spent the whole of the beautiful month of May at that workpeople's club at Mine Ferry looking after it while the Merthyrs were having a holiday. She's there again this afternoon.'

'But that was splendid of her,' I said.

'So it was, but she overdoes things. She was quite pale when she returned. And now she's always worrying about Ireland, and our ancestors, and says we ought to think more of our own country.'

'Too many of the old families have left the country and become absentees in England,' I remarked.

'That's what she says, and I suppose that accounts for her buying Ballyquin. I recall it so well. Isabel and your mother and I were about the same age. I remember the shock we got when we heard of Isabel running away with that ne'er-do-well rebel, Barry. Poor Isabel! and the son takes after his father, I've been told, I mean in his politics, for I formed quite a favourable impression of his appearance and manners when he came here with you that time. But you

like him, I'm so glad to hear that, and Mary seems to keep up her friendship with him; indeed, she said something about having asked him to come here while you are with us.'

Colonel Fremington, a handsome, square-jawed, fresh-looking man about fifty, and a red-haired girl wearing a monocle in her right eye and carrying a Pekinese puppy under her left arm, came towards us. The Colonel I had met when he came over to see Ballyquin, and I was introduced to Miss Blount, who offered me the puppy to kiss. Immediately afterwards Dick Falcon came rolling up, his face beaming with kindness.

'And how are you, old boy? Back again!' he cried. 'Jolly glad to see you. And how's the colonies getting on? All right? I thought so. It's my belief,' he added solemnly, 'that there's not much wrong anywhere.'

He became engaged in giving tea to Miss Blount and providing cream for the puppy, while the Colonel sat down and offered me a cigarette.

'I'm glad you're ready for us,' he said. 'They'll be over in a fortnight or so. A picnic at first, taking only two servants and trusting to pick the others up locally. I'm not going myself till later on, but my secretary is a devilish smart woman and she'll look after things—wake you up, my boy, if the paint's not dry or the bells don't ring. Of course, it's for the hunting I took the place, but my youngsters, five of them, can't stay in town all the summer and they must amuse themselves until the hunting season begins.

To tell you the truth, Quin, I couldn't afford to mount 'em in England, but if there's one good thing you can say without hesitation about Ireland it is that you get your sport cheap. As for this supposed discontent with our Government, I don't believe it. I never saw any while I was over fishing. Why, they've got everything they can want, from land laws to cheap dog licences, to make 'em content. Still, I mean to have a look round for myself and be able to talk straight to the fellow that's going to contest my seat.'

He was much the sort of Englishman Brian had pictured him, and as I was too indifferent about his views to wish to argue with him, I was glad of Dick's intervention.

'Jolly glad to see you,' he said again. 'It's a good bit since you were here, eh? Lots of things have happened, but to tell you the truth I can't think of anything worth mentioning. Where's my pipe?' he addressed us collectively in a tone of reproach as if we were all responsible for its loss, and having found it in his chair took my arm and invited me to come and see his new car.

When Mary returned she at once led me away through the gardens for a walk.

'Brian's at Mine Ferry,' she said. 'I met him at the Merthyrs this afternoon.'

I had expected him the following day, so was not surprised.

'And we've been fighting for an hour,' she laughed, looking very animated and ready to

renew the battle. 'I asked him to stay here while you are with us. I gave him the invitation from mother. He is coming over to-morrow to thank her and have a walk, and I suppose another fight with me, but he won't stay with us. He says he cannot come under false pretences, and if my father knew his views he wouldn't be welcome.'

'No, he wouldn't,' I agreed.

'But why is he so narrow? I understand his love for Ireland. It's in my blood. It's home. But why should loving Ireland make you hate England?'

'He's in the fight, Mary, and a leader in it. You and I are looking on.'

'But why fight? We want friendship.'

'He regards England's idea of friendship as absorption into England. True friendship recognises independence.'

'It does,' said Mary warmly; 'and if he and I are to be good friends he must recognise *my* independence. He doesn't. "If you are not on our side you are against us," is his contention. He is so absorbed by his own views about Ireland that he takes no interest in mine.'

'Anyhow he takes an interest in you.'

'In me? My views are part of me,' she said.

I remembered her saying, when she told me about the artist she had been engaged to, that it was her appearance, not herself, he wanted to marry, that herself he did not know. In her sympathy with Irish aspirations, in her purchase of Ballyquin, she had taken her own way undeterred by the indifference or opposition of her

family, and it was clear that she resented Brian's assumption that she was not a whole-hearted Irish woman because she wished to draw closer between England and Ireland the bonds which he wished to sever. More than this, she resented his unwillingness to see from her point of view, or allow his conviction to be modified by hers.

'It was as if he wished to emphasise the difference of our outlook,' she said, 'instead of trying to find points we could look out from together, or the things we could learn from each other. "No," he said, "it comes to this, I am a rebel and you are a loyalist."'

I expressed my opinion that Brian cared so much for her friendship that he wanted her to know his true self so as to be sure that any regard she gave him was on firm foundations, but she laughed a little derisively at my explanation and changed the subject to tell me that she proposed to come over to Ballyquin on a visit to the Fremingtons directly they were settled in. Meantime she suggested I should join their party on the yacht at Cowes.

I was perplexed as to whether Mary and Brian were in love with each other. I believed that the interest they showed in each other was warmer than friendship, and yet it was as friends that they met and contested. Each, I knew, had a heart capable of passionate devotion which if once evoked by a cause or a person would sweep away all hostile interventions; but the signal between man and woman, given in a look or a word or a touch, could not have passed between them. I

felt that if they were thrown together that signal would be made before long; but I feared the obstructions which might keep them apart, obstructions of counter-influences. What of Trenta Byrne? and Captain Fremington? When, however, soon afterwards I saw Mary and Lord Grantry together, and observed the affection and friendliness of their relationship, I thought that it might be her father rather than a rival suitor who would be likely to stand in Brian's way.

Lord Grantry looked prosperous, and I say it with no intention of disapproval. Why should he not? We admire a well-grown tree or a horse in good condition. His life agreed with him, he had made it agree with him, he had accomplished the things he had attempted. The keen grey eye, whose glance used to make me feel as if I had left something undone, was as bright as ever, but I thought there was more geniality in his expression than formerly. I was glad to find that I no longer stood in awe of him, and though he might think me a fool for having given up the fine prospect of a career which he had made possible for me, I cared nothing. I was conscious of having won my independence and of feeling comfortable in that knowledge. We had a short conversation before dinner about my New Zealand life and the prospects of farming in Ireland, and I was gratified by the praise which he gave to some articles of mine on water-fowl which had appeared in the *Field*. I recognised that he was a man who might be very popular with those who did not fear him, but likely to inspire a passive resentment, born

of their own consciousness of submission, in those who felt his control.

The presence of guests and the entertainment of neighbours was apparently of such common occurrence at Grantry Park that Mary had not forewarned me of what seemed to me a dinner-party of some magnitude. All she had said was that I was to take in to dinner Mercy Fremington, whom I had already met on our voyage home, and who was one of the three friends she had in view as a possible wife for me. She said, 'You will see another of them, Margaret D'Alton, on the yacht. Mercy has published a little volume of poems, and I'm sure she'd love to live in your tower. Margaret is prettier and has a delightful habit of blushing, but is not quite such good company. Don't make up your mind till you have seen all three.'

Though I had outgrown my boyish alacrity to fall in love I was, as I have said, very willing to fall, and the prospect of taking the opportunity Mary was kind enough to propose was very pleasant. The picture of Clara Hook, surely a young lady to admire, also presented itself to me; but I had seen her, I had also seen Miss Fremington; the unseen was the most attractive, Miss D'Alton was the favourite. I was ready to endow the unknown with the qualities of my dreams, and a word of suggestion, 'a delightful habit of blushing,' or 'a comely figure,' was enough to bring to my imagination the image of the maiden I was seeking. Hitherto there had always been disappointment but always renewed expectation,

and I was beginning to wonder if Brian had not been right in saying that as we grow older we lose the generous faculty of falling in love without calculation. Miss Fremington did not fulfil the expectation of my dreams, but as I looked at her friendly eyes and heard her pleasant voice I asked myself whether I would not be a very fortunate man if I could win the affection of such a girl. My judgement approved of her, my judgement was better than when I was a boy; but it had been pleasant to be thrilled against one's judgement. When Mercy touched my arm as we went in to dinner I was not affected as I had been long ago when Annette's hand touched mine under the table at the roadside inn. We had a little talk in the drawing-room while the guests were assembling and at once found a subject of interest in Ballyquin.

'From Mary's description I am sure I shall love the place,' she said.

'When Mary loves a place or a person she describes them in a way that makes you believe that you will love them too. She described you to me,' I added gallantly.

'What did she tell you about me?'

'A whole volume of poems.'

'Oh,' she said, missing or ignoring the compliment, 'but it was a very little volume.'

I thought of a similar excuse the girl in *Peter Simple* made for producing a baby.

'And you,' she said, 'are a naturalist, and sometimes sleep at night in a boat among the reeds of the lake so as to be ready to watch the habits of the birds at dawn. How delightful to

wake up and find a sedge-warbler singing within a yard of you. Mary says you take more interest in birds and animals than you do in people.'

'They are always interesting,' I replied; 'some people are too, but the habits of most people are dull and even depressing.'

'Their surroundings, not themselves.'

'But you cannot separate them from their surroundings. Follow the daily life of one of these countless working-men or clerks or employers from his home in a red brick street or his villa in a suburb to his factory or his mine or his desk, and compare it with the daily life of a bird, of the rook that wakes in his little town among the tree-tops and has a world of sunny hills and sheltered fields around him to choose his place of business from, and after spending the day with his own party, using his knowledge of seasons, weather conditions, and natural history every hour of the day with more insight and eagerness than the most skilful fisherman, returns home unwearied, and mingles with the talking, acclaiming community that circles above the tree-tops in the sunset before it settles for the night.'

She seemed amused at my enthusiasm, but said thoughtfully, 'I see what you mean about the surroundings and the creature being one. I suppose it is because they are free that the wild creatures are so interesting; they would be much less so in cages. We are most of us in cages.'

I should like to have continued talking on my favourite subject, but Mary, engaged in helping her mother in the greeting and assorting of guests,

passed me with a nod and a smile and drew our attention.

'Isn't she wonderful? and pale blue suits her better than anything,' said my companion, following her with admiring eyes.

I agreed that she was wonderful.

'And the better you know herself the more beauty you find in her face. How can any man help being in love with her? You are, of course!'

I shook my head. 'Perhaps if I could find faults in her I should be more susceptible,' I said.

'Haven't you found out her faults?' she asked with amusement. 'I suppose only a woman could do that. Shall I help you to fall in love by telling you some of them?'

'You're going to say she's fond of admiration.'

'Who isn't?'

'That she's erratic, gets carried away by new enthusiasms.'

'No, all the things she takes up are consistent. Woman's suffrage, the cause of the work-people, Irish Nationalism—in all these things there is the idea of freedom and justice. No! her fault is that she doesn't always tell the truth, and she isn't always sincere.'

I wondered if she were joking.

'I don't mean to her friends,' continued Mercy; 'she's the most loyal of friends, but to others, especially to those she doesn't like. She smiles on them all. Perhaps it's because she's Irish.'

'A queen to her subjects,' I suggested.

'A queen may be gracious to her subjects

but should not be sarcastic when they leave her presence. Now look at her talking to that little man with the smug self-satisfied face. That's the new Rector. She's saying something to him that's making him feel delighted with himself and almost ready to become a Roman Catholic; and she described him to me as a bumptious little beast with a nose like an agouti.'

There was no question about Miss Fremington's affection and admiration for her friend, nor of her pleasure in criticising her. I remembered chaffing Mary on board ship about her being all things to all men, and her answer, 'Not to my friends'; but though I had criticised her myself I felt a slight resentment at hearing anything in her dispraise from another. Perhaps I was beginning to fall in love with her.

Beautiful roses in large silver bowls greeted our eyes on the mellow mahogany table; candles were lighted, but their pale gleam was hardly visible in the evening glow; the exquisite dresses of fair ladies linked the company in a chain of soft colour. So does civilisation disguise our cannibalism and give grace to our assemblage for the devouring of our humble fellow-creatures.

I surveyed the scene with interest. In the colonies our festivities had been rough and ready, in Ireland our little dinner-parties were neighbourly and informal; this was the first representative social gathering I had been at in England. Looking round I made one or two recognitions, among them Sir Wilberforce Bullman; and my companion told me that the lady who was next our host was

the Dowager Duchess of Bedminster, who had opened more bazaars than any one in England except the Royal aunts. The man on her left was a Mr. Sheffield, one of the Unionist Whips, and opposite to her was Lady Bullman; but the guest who interested me most was Captain Fremington, whom Mary had rewarded for his adventurous visit by making him her partner, and whose gallant bearing and handsome sunburnt face attracted me even more than when I had seen him at Gibraltar. His niece noticed the direction of my glance. 'There's one thing you must admit is more interesting among human beings than birds,' she said, 'and that is their mating; and the more civilised we are the more subtle it becomes. Any mate does for a bird, almost any for a labourer.'

'And this from a poet!' I exclaimed. 'I thought you found the simple life of the poor, the idylls of peasant love, the——'

'Poetry used to live with make-believe,' she interposed; 'they have parted company. They don't even walk out together, like our maids and their young men. Poetry must interpret truth.'

'That's just what we've found with ours,' said Lady Bullman, joining with interest in the conversation. 'They sometimes walk together for years; and don't you think it's perhaps a good thing, for it's such a bother when a really valuable servant leaves to get married.' She caught my eye and nodded and smiled. 'I'm sure we've met before. Ah yes, of course, Mr. Quin, and how did you enjoy your life in foreign climes?'

I told her I was very glad to be at home again.

'Yes, there's no place like home. I've sometimes wished to travel, but my husband won't go abroad. The farthest we've been from home was to Madeira and the Canary Islands, but that was on a British ship, and, as Sir Wilberforce said, "the sea is part of the British Empire." He would not go on shore at Teneriffe because they cheated us in changing our money at Madeira.'

'And you went ashore alone?' said Mary, joining in.

'With a party, my dear, and we were well repaid. The flowers were wonderful, and there happened to be a flower festival at Orotava. The whole of the street and square in front of the church was paved with flowers and made into designs and patterns. There was a most beautiful picture of the Holy Ghost done in geraniums.'

'A difficult subject, but those foreigners are so clever,' observed Miss Fremington.

Colonel Fremington, who was on Lady Bullman's right, suppressed a laugh, and the lady on my left smiled queerly and spoke of the forthcoming bazaar to be opened by the Duchess at Mine Ferry, 'for the Zoologists' Widows' Fund,' she explained. 'I'm not quite sure who they are, but I think it's the attendants at the Zoo.'

I expressed my sympathy with the cause, and turned to my partner, in whose eye I detected a twinkle.

'As to the relationship of truth to the imagination you were going to observe?' she said.

'I vote we postpone the subject,' I laughed.

'I hear them talking about Ireland in a way that would make you angry.'

'No, it only amuses me,' I replied.

Miss Falcon, a daughter of Lord Lohort and niece of Lord Grantry, a graceful lady of mature age who looked as if she had ripened without sweetening, spoke severely of her country, a country in which no loyal subject could now live. 'It's all very well for my cousin Mary to go there and spend her money,' she said, shooting a look at me; 'it's people like us who depend on our rents and ask for our bare rights who have to suffer. She has not found them out yet.'

I noticed that she said *they* and not *we* in speaking of Ireland. Colonel Fremington remarked that you could not help liking the people in spite of their faults.

'They're plausible and pleasant to your face,' said Miss Falcon, 'but oh! their treachery. You could hardly believe the cruelty of some of the things that have been done. There was the case of a friend of ours, Mrs. Beasley in County Clare, a widow whose husband had been unpopular because he was just, and of course a Protestant. After his death she remained on in the place and tried to keep things together. There was some unpleasantness about the sale of a farm, and then the persecution began and culminated in the most shocking action you can conceive. One morning when she came down to breakfast and opened the hall door she found her dear husband's tombstone on the steps.'

Some of her listeners looked shocked, one or two struggled with their smiles, Mary Falcon actually laughed.

'Oh, Gertrude,' she said, 'how funny! It was as if her husband had left his card.'

'It's hardly a thing to joke about, I should have thought,' said Miss Falcon with asperity. 'It was cruel, cruel. And you think such a people fit for self-government!'

I was appealed to by Captain Fremington. 'What would Ireland's attitude be in case of war?'

'That would depend upon who the enemy was,' I answered. 'Ireland won't consent to have her enemy chosen for her by England.'

'She's got to. Who defends Ireland?' put in Mr. Sheffield.

'Would your people be against Germany?' asked Fremington.

I thought it probable.

'Would you stand conscription?'

'Possibly, if we had self-government. Not without it.'

He spoke with keen interest. 'You people at home have to set your house in order,' he said to Mr. Sheffield. 'The Germans are counting on trouble in Ireland.'

Lord Grantry joined in the conversation. 'You speak as if you really expected there would be war, Fremington.'

'I do, sir.'

'War's out of date,' said Sir Wilberforce Bullman.

The subject was of general interest. Most of us stopped in our little duologues to listen.

'Does the country realise,' Fremington turned to Lord Grantry, 'what is involved by our new naval understanding with France? We have refused to act up to our responsibilities. We won't spend the money to make our navy supreme, not even for the margin of safety, and we have entered into an agreement with France to concentrate our fleet in the North Sea and leave her to guard the Mediterranean and our sea route to the East. What is that but an alliance with France, an obligation to defend her in the North Sea in case of war? And a war between France and Germany is inevitable.'

Mary looked whole-hearted approval of Fremington while he was speaking. All that was best in British tradition seemed to be embodied in his personality, and thinking of Brian I realised that rival ideals as well as individuals might be contending for Mary's favour.

'I agree with you, Fremington,' said Lord Grantry; 'the country does not realise what is involved in that understanding with France.'

'I believe in the British sailor,' said Sir Wilberforce Bullman, 'and I hold that one British ship is as good as two Germans, but I don't hold with any foreign relations, and I don't believe in the *aunt-aunt cordiale*.'

'But we must remember that that was King Edward's doing,' said Lady Bullman. 'He was afterwards known as the Uncle of Europe.' She seemed pleased to have made us laugh without apparently knowing our reason.

'I was insulted the only time I was in France,' Sir Wilberforce informed us.

'Oh, do tell us about it,' said Miss Fremington.

'It was some years ago. I'm fond of racing, and a few of my friends persuaded me to go over and see the Grand Prix. Well, we were on the course coming away when some fellows in the crowd spotted we were English and said "à bas les Anglais."'

'Did you reply?' asked Mary.

'I did,' said he, 'in one word. I pointed my finger at them and I said one word, WATERLOO.'

Every one laughed again. 'A splendid retort,' said Lord Grantry, 'though I'm afraid they may never have heard of Waterloo unless perhaps as a French victory.'

But Fremington was too much in earnest to be put off his theme by a diversion, and grew eloquent on the national danger and the necessity for a stronger navy, naming the number of cruisers and destroyers required to reach the margin of safety.

Colonel Fremington, whose attentive interest in Mary was obvious and who perhaps did not wish to be left behind his brother in expression of patriotic zeal, said that there was at all events one party in the country that realised the danger and was fighting England's battles in the House and at the polls. Their task was to make the country understand the danger. 'We ought to be united as a country in the question of defence, and we're not. We're a divided house, and,'

he added, turning to Mary, 'the first thing we ought to do is to settle the Irish question by agreement instead of making it a party question. In case of war it would be disastrous to have troubles in Ireland. I'm not yet sure whether the demand for self-government is a genuine thing. When I'm in Ireland I mean to find out. If it is, though I'm a Tory I'd give it 'em and make 'em friendly.'

'That's Mary's influence,' Miss Fremington confided to me. 'Up to yesterday father laughed at Home Rule.'

I heard Trenta Byrne's name mentioned. She had finished a brilliant season in the States by singing Irish rebel songs at a Patrick's Day concert in New York, and was now in London.

'A woman like that makes rebels by the thousand,' said Lord Grantry. 'Such beauty and such a voice combined would make any cause seem romantic. And there's a sort of romance about her life too. She married some foreign count who died and left her an immense fortune, which she loses if she marries again.'

'And I'm sure she's financing Irish sedition with it,' said Mr. Sheffield. 'We get a good deal of secret information. She's in with the new Sinn Fein movement. By the way,' he asked Lord Grantry, 'isn't Barry, the man who was here last year helping the Labour candidate, some sort of a relation of yours?'

'A distant cousin of my wife's,' he replied.

Mr. Sheffield said something to his host in a low tone.

'The story may be true, but I don't believe it. Perhaps Quin might know something about it,' Lord Grantry said aloud.

'What story, sir?' I asked.

'Oh,' said Sheffield, 'a report that's about. It was published in a Belfast paper and copied in the *Morning Post*, with quotations from speeches made at public meetings Barry had been holding in America. It was definitely stated that he had fought in the South African War on the side of the Boers against England.'

He looked at me inquiringly, and I was conscious of becoming very red in the face. 'I know nothing whatever about it,' I replied. 'Most things you see in the papers about political opponents are lies.'

'Of course it can't be true,' said Dick Falcon. 'If it is he deserves to be put up and shot.'

I was saved from further interrogation. Mary, with eyes flashing, but with perfect control of her voice, intervened.

'Don't you think, mother,' she said, 'that we might leave the discussion of our relations for a family party?' and Lady Grantry obeyed the signal and rose.

Mary's face was pale as she left the room, and her father looked vexed. We did not return to the subject when we resumed our seats.

Late that evening when the guests had dispersed Mary called me out to the terrace. 'I've been talking to father,' she said. 'Is that true about Brian?'

I told her that it was so, and that Brian had

intended to tell her himself. It was a few moments before she spoke. 'I can understand what father and mother will feel. Eustace was killed.'

'Brian was a boy,' I said. 'He was not an Englishman, fighting against his own country. He believed in the cause.'

I could not see her face in the dim light. Her voice was very troubled. 'Yes, he was a boy then, but has he changed? Does he regret it? Would he be prepared to get the King's pardon?'

'You will see him to-morrow. I'm sure he will be perfectly open with you.'

'We might have——' she began and broke off. 'Though father and mother might not be able to understand, I could understand and forgive and forget his fighting against us in a cause he thought a good one when he was a boy, but if he is irreconcilable now or were hostile if we were at war again it would freeze me against him. I can sympathise with Irish aspirations and would do what I could to help. I could even go against father and mother and remain Brian's friend if he gave allegiance to the King. But I cannot otherwise. It would divide us.'

'You could influence him,' I said. 'I believe he loves you.'

'Oh no! He loves Ireland. Well, good-night, dear old boy.'

Of what took place between Mary and Brian when they met next day neither of them said

much to me afterwards. The barrier that had arisen between them appeared to be insuperable. Mary had gone a long way in showing her Irish sympathies, and had not hesitated in facing the opposition of her own family. I can understand her feeling that if Brian had loved her he would have recognised this and have been influenced by her wishes, attempted to share her hopes, and consented to work for reconciliation instead of division between England and Ireland. I believe that her espousal of the Nationalist cause and her purchase of Ballyquin had been prompted by her love of Brian, and that she knew this in her heart, and that her pride was hurt in having taken an initiative which should have been his, and to which he did not respond. Brian, I was sure, would have no make-believe. He let her see him as he was, and would make no pretence of compromising with his principles. He found her incapable of appreciating his point of view that he owed no submission to an English king, and would be untrue to himself and to his country and fetter his future freedom of action by asking for a pardon.

Whether Brian had told Mary that he loved her I cannot guess: it would have been just like him to do so in the hour when he had let her see that part of himself which she turned from, but which he felt she must be shown in order to realise the man he really was. If so, she must have made it clear to him that she was not to be won by a love that could make no sacrifice. To me, however, they were both reticent. Mary,

I believe, looked forward to a continuance of her friendship with Brian, but he seemed to regard that interview as a definite severance of their ways.

I felt disinclined to join the yachting party at Cowes, and made the farm business and preparations for receiving the Fremingtons my excuse for refusal. Mary did not change her arrangements for visiting Ballyquin.

CHAPTER XIII

BRIAN AND TRENTA: A PUBLIC VIEW

SHORTLY after my return from England I received from Brian the notice of a great festival of the Gaelic League to be held in Cork. He suggested that I should attend, and proposed to come back with me to my tower and stay for a day or two afterwards. Trenta Byrne, the advertisement showed, had promised to sing at the evening meeting, and a wish to see and hear her decided me at once to be present. This evening meeting, I found, was attracting unusual attention, as it was expected to have a political significance extending beyond the ordinary scope of the League.

Brian, who was engaged in the arrangements, was not at his room at the University when I called, but he had left instructions with one of the students to entertain me and accompany me to the meeting. He was a youth of seraphic countenance, with golden hair which he wore conspicuously long, agreeable manners, and the name of Owen Fitzgerald. From my own experience of our modern young men they generally seemed to be self-contained, given to worldly wisdom, and

incapable or ashamed of showing enthusiasm for a cause or expressing a passionate devotion for their religious or political faiths; in Fitzgerald I found one of hundreds of young men, and their number was constantly growing, for whom the love of Ireland was an inspiration, the hope of her emancipation a cause to live or die for.

I discovered that my young friend was an unknown poet with ambition to stir in song the soul of the nation, and that he had a profound admiration for Brian, and believed in him as a future leader of the country.

'You will see,' he said as we were walking to the meeting, 'what a reception he will get. 'Twill be a wonderful evening. Did you know that Donna Aguilar is to sing?'

'Donna Aguilar?' I repeated. 'Oh, Trenta Byrne! Yes.'

'The greatest singer, the most beautiful woman in Europe. Don't you know the story of her marriage?' he exclaimed, much pleased to be able to give me the details, which I had not heard. 'I thought it would be all over the world. Don Aguilar, the richest merchant in Spain or Portugal, I forget which, an old fellow with a passion for music, married her about two years ago and died six months afterwards. He made a will, bad manners to him, leaving her twenty thousand a year, or it might be more, for her life unless she married again, and then she was only to have five hundred. She married him of course to have the money, but 'twas for Ireland she wanted it. All her wealth she gives to the cause, and all her genius

too, for she has a voice that can do as much for us as an army.'

'And she loses the money if she marries,' I mused. 'Perhaps you cannot blame the old fellow, it was a business bargain on both sides.'

''Twas a mean brutal condition,' he exclaimed indignantly, 'to tie the bonds of a dead man's jealousy about the heart of a young woman. But she will not marry. She is giving up her own freedom to help us to win ours. She will not marry, and we will call her *The Bride of Erin*.'

I smiled indulgently at his youth and enthusiasm. I was perhaps a dozen years older than he, but I had never been so young as to be capable of calling a widow *The Bride of Erin*.

The prospect of seeing and hearing Trenta Byrne, whose story had stimulated my interest in her, made me look forward to the meeting, which in itself promised to be memorable, with keen anticipation, and as I sat among the students while the hall was filling I felt the infection of a growing excitement. Every seat was occupied, and men were still crowding into the standing places when the Lord Mayor, who was acting as chairman, followed by other speakers came on to the platform. A choir of young people, a band of pipers dressed in kilts, and some other performers were already there, and the great organ was rolling out patriotic tunes.

There was the usual, perhaps rather more than the usual, amount of cheering, shouting, and hailing of individual names, and when the Lady Mayoress and her party entered there was special and prolonged applause, due, Fitzgerald told me, to

Trenta Byrne being one of them, though from my seat I was unable to distinguish her.

The opening speech of the chairman, which dealt briefly with the patriotic work of the League and announced the evening's programme, was received almost in silence until near its end, when he spoke of the common purpose uniting those who were working in Ireland for all that was dearest to them in the national tradition with those who were fighting for their political freedom at Westminster. He cited names in both connections—famous names, Redmond, Dillon, O'Brien, and Hyde; and less known names, Griffith, Steele, Brian Barry. Each name was greeted with cheers, but there was not the least doubt that the applause for the untried leaders was greater than that for the established ones.

The secretary of the League read a report, and a recitation in Gaelic followed: the meeting threatened dullness: the feeling of expectation seemed to be changing to impatience, though a blast from the pipers did something to keep up the spirits of the audience. Then came a short speech from one of the members for the city—a speech bidding us rejoice in the knowledge that Ireland's hopes were at last to be fulfilled, that the long labour of her chosen representatives had been crowned with success, and that the Home Rule Bill was about to become law. When he ended I was amazed at the lack of enthusiasm in the audience; whether because the people had so often heard the same promise and disbelieved in its realisation, or because the Home Rule now to

be conceded fell short of their aspirations for self-government, I could not then gauge; but it was certain that the applause that the speech won was half-hearted, and I noticed that the students around me were silent. Immediately afterwards a complete change took place in the whole character of the meeting.

Trenta Byrne came forward to sing. She wore a white dress of old Irish design with gold embroidery, and her vivid beauty was like a centre of light to which every eye in the hall was drawn. After the applause which hailed her appearance there was complete silence before she began to sing. Then when a few bars had been struck on the piano and the first notes of her song had been uttered, we knew what she was singing, and with a storm of cheering the whole assemblage stood up.

'Who fears to speak of '98.'

These were the magic words. They set loose suppressed emotions, defined unrealised discontent. They breathed rebellion, and rebellion was in the hearts of the people. There was a proud smile on Trenta's face as she waited for the cheering to cease. Once more she essayed, but before the first line was ended the demonstration was renewed. The students were standing on the seats waving flags; the chairman seemed disconcerted; Brian's eye was fixed on Trenta and he looked deeply moved. At last there was silence, and Trenta's glorious voice rose in a clear stream of song that seemed to gather into its volume the unexpressed passions of the multitude, and to

reconcile in its beauty the incoherent dreams and expectations of a thousand turbulent hearts. I was myself carried away on the current of emotion, though I hardly knew what I felt stirred about, but the spirit of a multitude is an elemental thing: if I had been in the crowd that cried *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*, from morning even unto the night I should no doubt have shouted as loudly as any of them.

When the chairman called on Brian to give a report of his visit to America it was clear to me that the meeting expected more from him than an account of his mission, and in his opening words he showed that he was in touch with the spirit of the meeting and was himself stirred in an unusual degree.

'We do not fear,' he said, 'to speak of '98. We do not fear to speak of '48 nor of '67. The years we are ashamed to speak of are those that are unmarked by our struggles and dishonoured by our submission. I came here this evening to speak of the work of the Gaelic League, that kind foster-mother of our national traditions and guardian of our treasures; but my words on the subject will be few, for a sterner voice is calling. The League has helped us to realise that the nationhood of Ireland has been born again and that it has been revealed to ourselves, not in an attempt to make foolish bargains with English political parties, but in the determination of the people to live their own life. When I see that thousands of young men and women walk for miles to attend classes in Irish, in a language that

will not put a penny into their pockets, I know that the inspiration which our country has never failed to give her children is stronger to-day than it ever was. Language in itself does not make a nation, but the people whose faith can raise its language from the dead is a nation. Is it? or is not something more needed? Can we claim to be a nation until we claim also the rights of a nation, until we are prepared to make any sacrifice that is needed in defending that claim? A Home Rule Bill which allows us the privilege of becoming caretakers in our own house is going through the English Parliament and has been agreed to by our representatives; and if we accept it, we who call ourselves a nation are content to be dependants. Fellow-citizens! I have something to tell you now which to-morrow all the world will know: the men of the north are arming: the men who last autumn took the oath of the covenant are arming themselves to assert their independence. Can we who seek the independence of Ireland do less?'

His words raised a tremendous outburst of cheering, followed by an uproar which lasted several minutes, but all sections of the audience were anxious to hear what he had to say, and he was allowed to go on without interruption.

'We are told by those who would have us content to be connected with Great Britain that we have every privilege, every right of citizenship that belongs to the people of England and Scotland and Wales. That is untrue. The right that marks the free man from the bond is the

right to bear arms, and that is denied to us. In England, in Scotland, in Wales, there is a volunteer army composed of citizens who give their service in the defence of their country. In Ireland we are allowed no volunteer force; we are distrusted, forbidden. Is that equality? If Scotland were so treated would Scotland submit? Is one part of a united kingdom to say to another part *Thou shalt not?* Is that equality? No. Let us have no more of this hypocrisy.'

Again the cheering broke out louder and longer than before, and again he won silence.

'We are forbidden to arm ourselves, but they are arming in the north. They are arming to resist the Home Rule Bill which has been sanctioned by the Imperial Parliament, though to do so is illegal. Their leaders have said: "We will challenge the Government; they may tell us that it is treason, we will take the consequences." They in the north are divided from us in their aims, but we cannot withhold our admiration for their courage. We have been patient when they have rebelled. We have obeyed the law when they have defied it. Do you think we have done right? I tell you we are despised for our submission even by our enemies. What is Ireland doing? Waiting for the passing of a miserable Bill, a measure of emasculated self-government which treats us as the suspects of the Empire, and denies us the right to bear arms which is claimed and taken by every British dominion. Search your hearts and ask yourselves if you want the Bill. Let us be honest and have courage

to claim what we do want. I cannot speak for you all; I can speak for the young generation, whose voice to-day will be Ireland's voice to-morrow. Our claim is complete, unconditional independence. We shall ask for the rights, not of a colony, but of a nation. The time has come to raise our own army. England listens only to the arguments that are backed by force. Our volunteers shall compel England to listen; they shall lead us to the realisation of our hopes, or if they fail they will add another year to '98 and '48 and '67 that we shall not fear to speak of.'

I am not one to whom political oratory makes much appeal; the prejudice and exaggeration that move a crowd offend me; but the forcible statement of hard facts in Brian's speech was impressive, the enthusiasm of the people exciting, and my blood tingled with the exhilaration of rebellion. Led by Trenta we sang the 'Marseillaise,' and then, at Brian's appeal, for the chairman had lost control of the meeting, we formed a committee and made arrangements for the creation of a volunteer force and the enrolment of names.

I must admit that next morning, when I had done some serious thinking about it all, I felt that my emotion had for once outrun my judgement; but I can mark that evening as the date from which I clearly saw that the Union whose legislation was defied in Ireland, even by those who professed loyalty, was a dead letter, and that the spirit of our nationhood was a living reality, and that henceforth I should stand on the side of those who upheld it.

CHAPTER XIV

BRIAN AND TRENTA: A PRIVATE VIEW

At the end of the week Brian came down to stay with me for a couple of days. He was much absorbed in plans for the formation of the Volunteers. He seemed restless and disturbed in spirit—a condition which I attributed partly to the result of his visit to England, partly to the grave political responsibilities which he had taken upon himself. On the evening he arrived we had the talk I have spoken of about his interview with Mary.

Next morning I was occupied with farming business, and Brian in organising some local volunteer committees, and in the afternoon when we were about to set out for a long walk our plans were upset by the arrival of unexpected visitors. A fine motor-car had found its way up the bohereen leading from the road and was standing an incongruous object on the grass among the ruined walls. I saw a lady and two men, and was going forward to investigate when Brian exclaimed in a tone of surprise, 'It's Trenta! I thought she had gone to Dublin.'

She waved and cried a greeting directly she saw us, and then ran forward and gave me both her hands and burst into explanations. She was truly a very emotional woman, for never have I seen such sudden alternations of feeling as she showed within a few minutes. The joke of her visit and the presence of the young men, the poor hard-worked students — one of them was young Fitzgerald who had conducted me to the meeting at Cork — whom she had taken for a drive, the sudden decision to pay me a visit while Brian was with me, and the struggle of the grand hired car that looked like a private one in the ruts that guarded my mediaeval castle, were all described with laughing volubility; and then as we approached the tower she paused and exclaimed, 'Ah, I have not forgotten. It was there my father sat when we told him what we saw and what he could not see.' The tears ran down her cheeks, but I don't think she knew this, or, if she did, she had no thought of concealing her feelings, and a moment later she was laughing again. On the stage I knew that she had a great reputation as an actress. Off the stage she seemed to me to be an actress also, and to be playing almost naturally a part she had assigned to herself, that of the principal person, the living centre of every scene she entered. My ruins became a theatre to her, and when I was walking with her in the shadow of the old walls and we were speaking of the people who had dwelt in the place long ago, she said: 'They are not far off. If I were alone here I should

come out at night to this spot and sing to the ghosts the old beautiful songs that they made themselves.' She pictured and needed an audience, even of the dead. Wherever she went, thought I, she would have her own little court about her; and if Cork could not produce Grand Dukes or musical and artistic celebrities like St. Petersburg and Paris, she was pleased to have the University students or city councillors in her train.

The two boys she had brought with her were obvious worshippers. She was for them a living symbol of their country—their 'Dark Rosaleen'—and I was able to understand the fascination and to realise through her what an influence a beautiful and fanatical woman may become in revolutionary movements.

It was when we were gathered round the tea-table, which was laid out of doors, that I made these observations. Young Fitzgerald, his seraphic countenance glowing with ardour, was speaking of the progress of the volunteer movement; the other, a dark dishevelled young man, sat silent, with an expression in his eyes as of one who was habitually looking forward to an opportunity of dying for his country as some people habitually look forward to a meal. To them her manner was of a princess unbending to affectionate comradeship; to me she was flatteringly attentive; to Brian she hardly spoke, but once, when their eyes met, her slightly-lifted lids seemed to ask a question and his smile to show she had received the answer she wished.

My belief that it was to see Brian, not me or my ruins, that she had made the expedition was confirmed when the time for her departure drew near. 'I hate going so soon,' she said, 'leaving Ireland, leaving you all, for I must be in Paris to sing next week. I am going to Dublin to-morrow and this place is on the way. If only I had thought of it in time I would have asked you to let me stay here to-night. How I would have loved to sit as we did long ago and see the sunset and fancy my father was with us, instead of having to go back to Cork. Oh, Mr. Nicholas, do let me stay.'

'My dear lady,' I exclaimed. 'Why, where'd I put you? There's one little bedroom to be sure, for I am sleeping on the roof. But—but—Mrs. Begley!'

'Your housekeeper?' she laughed. 'Mrs. Grundy, Mrs. Begley?'

'Mrs. Begley,' I said solemnly, 'is a person of the strictest views, the austere guardian of my bachelor establishment. The notion of entertaining a lady without a chaperone would be impossible. She would forbid it. I should be proud to be your host, but I am helpless.'

'Where is Mrs. Begley?' she cried. 'Take me to her this moment. I want the recipe for her soda cakes.'

I never knew how it was done, but Trenta had a gift of getting her way, and when she and Mrs. Begley emerged from the kitchen I saw that there was an alliance between them.

'Will you be taking to the roof again to-night?'

she asked me, as if I were a cat. 'Well, then, we can manage if a small little room with no carpet on the floor will do, ma'am.'

'And, you see, my kit is with me,' cried Trenta. 'I am a wild person and never know where I will break my journey, so I always take with me some things. Mr. Nicholas, I will ask you to send my young friends in your pony carriage to catch the train for Cork; and Brian, you will drive me back in the car to-morrow morning, will you not? or if you cannot, I will drive myself.'

If Trenta's young friends were disappointed at having to return to Cork without her, she knew how to make them compensation. To Fitzgerald by a request that he should send her a copy of a poem of his own, some verses of which he had apparently recited to her, and to the other by making him the bearer of a confidential message about her movements and engagements to the editor of the *Cork Examiner*.

I sent them away soon afterwards to the station with Jamesy and the pony cart, and as Brian had an appointment to address a meeting in the yard at Ballyquin, Trenta proposed that I should take her for a walk round the lough.

'And now, Mr. Nick,' she said as we set off, 'the only way I can apologise to you for compelling you to be my host is to explain. I have an urgent communication for Brian, and something, not all of it, I may tell you, for I know you are with us.'

'I think you ought to be quite sure about that before you tell me any secrets,' I interrupted.

'I know those to whom I can confide,' she said with a delightful smile. 'You must believe we have not been idle since the meeting in Cork. I am myself making arrangements to hire for three months a large steam yacht. She will sail in three weeks, or sooner if all is prepared, and return to an Irish port full of arms. There is the crew to be selected: some will come from Cork, some we will pick up at Hamburg, the officers we must be sure of. We have an American captain; he is looking out. Oh! much to be done. I have influential friends in high places among England's enemies in Europe, and I have news from them for Brian. I am going myself from Paris to meet the yacht at Antwerp. Oh yes, for a holiday, to rest my voice! you will read it in the newspapers. When we return I will invite my friends on board. You too? There is much to be done. Brian must come to Antwerp if possible.'

'Gun-running, by Jove!' I exclaimed. 'What a lark.' I meant 'What a nuisance.' It was one thing to applaud a speech which asked if we were going to lag behind Ulster in rebellion, another to become an active conspirator. However, I had taken my side and must face the consequences.

'Fortunately I have money to help with,' said Trenta. 'I am rich. You know the story of my marriage? It reached New Zealand?'

I told her I had heard it.

'And besides my fortune,' she continued, 'I have money, large sums that I earn, and it will

go to the cause. When I sing I shall know that my songs are arming men. Each ringing note may become a bullet that some day reaches an English heart.' She stood with flashing eyes, amazing me that such hatred could be possible.

'My marriage was not unhappy,' she said, her manner once more quite serene, 'but nothing would ever make me marry again, not because I would lose my fortune, but my freedom. For your common mass of mortals their love may need the protection of the law or of religion, they are poultry to be guarded; but for the nightingale, for the eagle, there must be no cage.'

'There is something to be said for Mrs. Begley's views about marriage,' I said in a tone that amused her.

'Oh yes,' she laughed. 'Mrs. Begley! I do not yet know you, Mr. Nicholas. I cannot tell when you speak seriously and in jest. And you are not married, nor Brian.'

'We are looking out for wives, Madam.'

'Ah no, I see no preparation. She would want a villa and a telephone. You will not give up your tower and your freedom.'

Of our further conversation I only remember the interest with which she questioned me about Mary Falcon's purchase of Ballyquin, and as to whether she was coming to live there. 'I remember, too, so well the evening we were here together,' she said, 'and I envied her her thick brown hair. I have seen her since. She is a very beautiful lady, but in the pattern of the English,

so quiet and self-confident. She and Brian are great friends, are they not?'

'Oh yes, the best.'

'Why did she buy the place? She does not love Ireland. To please Brian?' she asked.

'She loves Ireland,' I replied.

'Patronises, not loves,' she said contemptuously. 'What does she know of the love of Ireland? But—she is your cousin, Mr. Nick; forgive me for my rudeness.'

At our little dinner party that evening Trenta was in gay spirits and made us merry. Brian, who had been quiet and preoccupied in the afternoon, was in a reckless mood that reminded me of his boyhood when we had adventures pending, and he needed no persuasion to do honour to my cellar. Trenta gave reminiscences of a journey when Brian had accompanied her and her father on the Continent, and mimicked in French, German, and Italian Brian's attempts to speak the languages of the countries they had visited. 'One of the phrases he never failed in was "A bas les Anglais",' she said; 'they always understood it in spite of his Cork accent, and it always made friends for us.' She treated him with the touch of affectionate raillery that is flattering to a man. Knowing as I afterwards knew the nature of the bonds she was preparing for him, I can see the significance of the little coils of fascination she threw out, comparable to the line you see tossed ashore when a ship is being berthed, the light line to which is attached the strong hawser that brings the ship to her moorings. And how

splendid she looked, quite simply attired in the white dress she had worn all day, with no other adornment than a cluster of marsh-marigolds which she had picked and wreathed in her black hair! As is general with great singers she had a finely developed neck and bosom, but with her this amplitude was accompanied with exceptional grace and beauty of modelling in her whole figure. I saw in her the woman who in every age has swayed men by captivating their senses, the woman who was in Brian's thoughts when he spoke of the attraction that can make men mad and untrue to their principles.

She had let me understand that she wanted a private conference with Brian about the gun-running scheme, though I suspected she had other reasons than this for wishing to be alone with him. Half an hour after dinner I gave her the opportunity she wanted, and said I was going to catch a trout for breakfast, the twilight being the best time for the lough. I went off in the flat-bottomed boat I had for working the shallows of the river, and, after catching a couple of half-pounders, I let the boat drift down the current of the stream. The river held a soft reflection of the failing light within its dark banks, white water-lilies glimmered on the surface outside the sedges, and the sound of the rippling water grew clearer as night fell and other sounds were silenced. I lit my pipe and fell into a mood of reverie. I was happy on the whole, I loved my occupation and surroundings, but there was something I lacked, something I was looking for. Good friends of all classes I had

in abundance; intimate friendship, affection I had in Brian, in Mary, in Aunt Margretta, yes in Jerry Hook and Clara; but I needed more. I longed for the fulfilment of my dream of love for a girl whose presence would transfigure my world. Was Brian right in saying I had left it too long? had become too critical? A woman like Trenta might attract my senses at any time of my life; the girl of whom I dreamed was as unlike Trenta as it was possible to conceive. Mary Falcon I admired with every approval of mind and eye, but she left my heart untroubled. And did she love Brian and he her? If they could but be brought together and some misunderstandings removed. . . .

I heard low voices near me. The boat had drifted into the sedges under the bank of the river; it had grown dark, and I was hidden from view. Brian and Trenta were walking on the path above, and as they passed I heard one fragment of their conversation, and they had passed on before I had time to let them know I was near. I heard little but it told me much. From the few words Trenta spoke I could imagine the whole scene that had led up to them, though I could only guess at the response they would receive. 'No,' she said, 'no! I cannot, I will not marry you, Brian, but—but—you may be my lover.'

What a temptation! what a temptress! A man must be something more or less than a man who could resist it, unless he were held by the love of another woman. Her fascination had

conquered him, had won him from the allegiance which I believed his soul had given to Mary, and he had asked her to be his wife. I could imagine the eloquence with which he had pleaded with her to make the sacrifice of her fortune for the sake of love; I could hear her ask him whether for love's sake he could not make the sacrifice of his respect for the world's conventions. I remembered what she had said about her own freedom. I read Brian well enough to know that the relationship that she proposed would be intolerable to him. That she should keep her fortune and retain him as her lover was to put him in a position comparable to that of a woman kept as a mistress. Yet there was the seductive woman, the ardent supporter of his cause, passionate, exquisitely beautiful, opening her arms to receive him.

Half an hour later, when I had tied up my boat and climbed the landing steps, I saw that the lamps had been lighted in the motor-car. A nearer approach showed Brian preparing to start the engine, Jamesy bearing his portmanteau, and Trenta wrapped up for travelling.

She ran to meet me. 'Oh, Mr. Nicholas,' she cried, 'what a mad woman you will think me, and how can I ask your forgiveness for forsaking your hospitality? The moonlight has bewitched me and I cannot rest. I have a great longing to fly away through the night. So Brian will drive me back now. Am I forgiven?'

I mumbled some indefinite response and left her conferring largesse on Mrs. Begley.

'Have you really decided to go?' I asked Brian in a tone that clearly showed my disapproval.

He took me aside, and we walked half-way down the grass glade in my ruined walls before he spoke. 'Yes, I am going,' he said. 'I have asked Trenta to be my wife.'

If there had been a chance of a quiet talk with him I think I should have told him what I had overheard, but I could not do so then.

'Has she consented?' I asked.

'No, not yet; but she will.' He grasped my hand in farewell. 'The renewal of our friendship has been a great thing to me, Nick, more than you know. Nothing, nothing must cast a shadow on it.'

Trenta overflowed with a gaiety which was quite undamped by my solemnity. 'Good-bye, dear Mr. Nick,' she cried as they were starting. 'Did you catch many fish? Only two little ones? and is not St. Nicholas the patron saint of fishermen? Ah, what a night! All I now wish for is one of those new aeroplanes—not wheels but wings; wings to carry us up into the moonlight.' She waved her hand. 'You will let me come and see you again? *A bientôt, mon ami.*'

There was still a streak of lingering daylight behind the mountains in the north and all the country was flooded with moonlight, stone walls, cottages and stretches of road shining white amid the dark tracts of woodland and moor. I stood watching the car as it crept down the bohereen and turned into the highway. Quarter of a mile farther on were the cross roads, one turning south-

wards to Cork, the other continuing westward. As the car approached the corner there was no slackening of speed for the turn, and a moment later I saw it had gone on westward towards Killarney.

There was sorrow mingled with anger in my heart as I turned back to my tower.

> Choose well: your choice is
> Brief and yet endless.

The lines kept assailing me, and I knew that Brian had made the wrong choice.

CHAPTER XV

ANNETTE'S COUSIN

It seemed to me that nothing less than a catastrophe had happened to Brian, a dislocation of his life which would prevent his being true to himself or only allow him to be so through tribulation, whereas it might have been so through happiness. To some men a liaison may be an episode; to a man of his nature I felt it would produce permanent reactions on his character and fortunes. The disaster looked equally great whether Trenta married him or not. If I did not wholly misread his character the union could not be a happy one, and it might be the lesser of two evils that they should not marry. Of course he would make every effort to induce her to do so, and if he failed I was sure he would not continue a relationship which he would regard as humiliating and dishonourable. In either case he was divided from Mary, from the one woman to whom he could be both friend and lover. It was a real grief to me to see the lives of the two people I cared for most thus denied the happy fulfilment I had counted on. The darkness of their horizons clouded my

own outlook, the thought of my next meeting with Brian was painful, the prospect of Mary's visit lost its pleasure, and I went about my daily work and followed my peaceful routine with less content than usual.

I became very conscious at this time of a want in my own life—of the need of comradeship. I wanted a wife, and I could not fall in love. Some vague picture of the lady of my dreams had become the rival of all the nice girls I met. The thought of Clara Hook, of Mercy Fremington, both of them cultivated and good-looking young women not beyond reach of a venture in courtship, did not quicken my pulses by a single beat. Danny Coote's sister Nora, as merry and sensible and comely a girl as you would find in a hundred families, would have made a capital wife for any one—except me. Mary herself, whom I could now regard as separated from Brian, Mary I looked upon with affection and admiration but with as little desire for possession as a poor man seeking a home to live in would feel in looking at a royal palace. I was in love with an expectation, seeking what did not exist, and gradually sinking into bachelorhood with every desire to become a married man.

I found that Aunt Margretta and the Miss Beresfords with whom she was still living had also been discussing the subject of my marriage. These elderly gentlewomen lived on a small jointure in one of the old houses in the main street of Mallow, and I frequently looked in to see my aunt there. I am rather popular with old maids,

partly I suppose because I like them, and partly because I always treat them as if they were young, and, indeed, sometimes flirt with them. My aunt was only five years my senior and hardly looked that. The Miss Beresfords were perhaps ten years older, but they had preserved some of the sunshine of girlhood through the chills of disappointment. Their motherly instincts came out among other ways in match-making, and I found that they and my aunt had been discussing me in connection with the young ladies of the neighbourhood who were eligible as wives. One after another they married them to me, but the curious thing was that immediately I showed an interest in the lady and spoke of an introduction she was condemned. 'Oh, she'd never do for you, Nick; her hands are like a man's'; or 'She looks well enough on a horse but she never read a book in her life'; or 'Aren't her relations tanners in Cork?' These ladies were gentlewomen but they had old-fashioned notions about social standing and trade, in these days considered snobbish, which they expressed without any fear of such a charge. It was clear that in my aunt's view, at all events, hardly any one was good enough for me; and although I do not think vanity is one of my sins, it was very pleasant and cheering to be thought so much of.

'Get married yourself,' I said to Aunt Margretta. 'You're as fresh and young as the best of them.'

'An old thing like me!' she answered. 'If they didn't want me when I was a girl and had

some sort of position in the county, who'd take me now?'

'I can assure you she had plenty of admirers when we were abroad,' the elder Miss Beresford told me. 'There was one gentleman at our pension at Dinard, a retired Meejor in the army' (I cannot resist spelling the word in this way, it was so characteristic of her speech), 'who was evidently *occupé* with your aunt, and I'm sure if we'd stayed any longer he'd have proposed for her. And then——'

'Oh, nonsense,' interrupted my aunt: 'an old fellow with a white moustache and a daughter as big as myself! No! I was born to be an aunt, and I want you to get married, Nick, and have your children to be fond of.'

You will see that I was quite ready and willing to fall in love, and within a very short time the thing actually happened in a very unexpected way.

Ballyquin was ready for its new occupants, and Colonel Fremington had written to me giving the date of their arrival. I was therefore rather surprised a couple of mornings after my visit to Aunt Margretta to receive the following note, which was sent over from the house by hand.

DEAR MR. QUIN—I am Colonel Fremington's secretary, and came here last night with a couple of maid-servants to make some preparations for the arrival of the family. I am very sorry to be troublesome, but I am afraid I must bother you about several things that want attention. The pump that supplies the house is not in proper working order, the wires of the bells from some of the rooms are broken, and the scullery flue smokes rather

badly. I see that there is no supply of coal in the cellar, and that the large coach-house, which I suppose we shall use as a garage, is full of farm implements, which I hope you will remove. I also want you to allow me to consult you about getting additional servants. Perhaps you can recommend a reliable kitchenmaid from the neighbourhood, and I want to know the best tradespeople with whom to open accounts. As there is not much time to spare, could you perhaps come over and meet me here this afternoon?—Yours sincerely,

A. M. WILLIAMSON.

P.S.—I feel that I shall not be meeting a complete stranger. I am a cousin of an old acquaintance of yours whom you may perhaps remember. Her name is Annette Williamson, and when I told her I was coming here and might meet you she was very much interested. She said you had had a very merry meeting on a walking tour years ago and was anxious to be remembered to you.

This letter, or rather its postscript, made me look forward with interest to meeting its writer. If Annette herself had no place in my heart, the memory of her had always remained a sweet possession, and I had a real wish to hear of her and her fortunes. This cousin appeared to be a capable and business-like person; her letter suggested that she was a managing woman, one who would see to it that the tenant's interests were properly looked after at Ballyquin. Colonel Fremington had spoken of her as a 'devilish capable young woman', and I was glad that he had said 'young': it might be interesting to put her in her place. But my interest was to hear of Annette, perhaps through her cousin to get into communication with her again; and, although I

told myself that my recollection of her was only a boyish dream, that I had idealised her and might be shocked by the contrast of the real with the imagined if we met again, I nevertheless was attracted by the prospect of seeing her, by the possibility that she really might not be a disappointment. To Miss Williamson I sent back a note saying that I would be over at Ballyquin that afternoon at four o'clock.

After we had met I took a different view. My thoughts, as I said, were full of my old sweetheart, and at first sight of Miss Williamson as she came across the park to meet me I could have believed it was Annette herself. As she drew nearer, as she smiled a first greeting before we spoke, the impression remained. It was Annette, a little taller, rather younger than she would now have been, perhaps better looking, but amazingly like. I am afraid I must have stared at her unconsciously.

I am sure she blushed and seemed a little taken aback when we met. 'I almost thought it was Annette,' I said to account for my scrutiny.

'And indeed I'm not surprised,' she answered, 'for we are often mistaken for sisters. We used to be even more alike than we are now. It's a long time, isn't it, since you saw her?'

'Ten or twelve years,' I said as we turned back to the house. I made a quick calculation. Annette must be now at least thirty, and this girl could not be more than twenty-five or twenty-six. 'She's not married?' I asked.

'Not yet. She's engaged to be married.'

'A nice man?'

'Very. A good deal older than herself.'

'I have a great mind to try and cut him out,' I laughed, 'if—if she's still like you.'

'Don't try. You wouldn't have the least chance.'

'What did she say about me?'

'Oh, she said you were a charming Irish boy.'

'And I expect she'd hardly know me. I believe the picture we keep of people in our minds actually undergoes a change as we change ourselves. But you—you're just what she might have become.'

'Perhaps you will see us together. She may come to see me here. I'm a little taller than Annette.'

'And younger.'

'No, we're about the same age.'

There was this difference between the two: my companion had the unmistakable style and manner of a lady which Annette just missed. Her accent in speaking, too, was different, though her voice had a quite familiar sound. In general appearance she belonged to the same type, and I found it as fascinating now as long ago. It was the fair type with the delicate pink tint of complexion and soft, thick light-brown hair, which may be insipid when the face is weak but are the loveliest adornment to features that have character.

'Tell me something more about Annette,' I asked.

'She has had a good deal of anxiety lately, but

her engagement has helped to relieve it. Her younger sister is consumptive, and they say the best chance of her recovery is a winter in South Africa. Her father is poor and Annette could not have found the money for this, but her fiancé is doing everything. Annette is to take her out, and I expect to hear that they will be starting almost at once. I'll tell you more about her, if you like, another time. And now, about the pump!'

'Oh, now I meet the secretary,' I said in a tone of resignation. 'She is about forty and has rather sharp features. That's what I pictured from her letter. The pump! We must see Uncle de Courcy about that.'

'And who's Uncle de Courcy? A plumber?'

'Yes, among other things. He's my uncle, the engineer of the estate. I wonder you haven't seen him about the place, a rather ragged old fellow with a beard and blue eyes.'

'Goodness!' she exclaimed. 'Was that your uncle? I was in the shrubbery this morning, and when he saw me coming he hid behind a tree. I followed, and then he ran to another tree, and then—then I'm afraid I shied a stone at him and he fled altogether.'

I could picture the comical plight of the poor man who acted with the mingled curiosity and fear of an animal. When I told her of his peculiarities she was sincerely distressed and eager to find him at once to make amends for what she had done, but I told her it would probably be a day or two before he would venture

near the place again, and that we must find some one else to attend to the pump.

Annette's cousin was very business-like. I had no notion there were so many defects in the house until I went through it with her, and I was amazed at her observation in discovering them so soon: locks without keys, windows that would not shut close, holes in the floors. It had always been so and we had not troubled about it.

'Of course if you want the house rebuilt,' I said, 'you must talk to the landlord, to Miss Falcon, when she comes. I'm only the agent, and I consider it is let too cheap as it is.'

'Have you had the smoke test tried on the drains?' she asked.

'No,' I replied firmly, and with as much annoyance as I could feel towards so charming a person.

She had already mapped the house and decided which of the rooms were to be occupied by different members of the family. My grandfather's room was for the Colonel. She had chosen for herself the room overlooking the shrubbery that used to be our nursery. She inquired if I had got her a kitchenmaid, as if that was part of an agent's duties, and went on bombarding me with questions about butchers, laundries, and wages and such things, as if I were in a witness-box, until just as I was beginning to feel impatient about it I saw a twinkle in her eye and understood that she was amused herself.

'But you will help me,' she said; 'I want

to have it as nice as I can for them. They're English and accustomed to be comfortable.'

'And you're Irish?'

'Of course I am. Didn't Annette tell you we were? But she was brought up in England. Now I want to get the business finished, then we can talk of other things. The kitchenmaid?'

I promised her an interview with Briget Hanlon, a daughter of one of our men, next morning; I undertook to give her the address of a registry office in Cork where she might get a housemaid; I gave her the names of the tradesmen with whom I dealt myself: all of which she took down in a notebook. I promised that Tom Connors, the best carpenter in Ireland, should see if anything could be done with the windows she complained of, and I swore that the pump should be at work in twenty-four hours. 'And now,' I said, 'let's go and see if the piano is in tune or if the rats have made nests in it; and then I'll show you my grandmother's still-room and Uncle de Courcy's workshop, and then, my dear, darling lady! let us sit down and have a cup of tea.'

We were talking in one of the larger rooms which had usually been kept for guests, and Miss Williamson pulled the old-fashioned bell-rope which hung down at the side of the mahogany four-post bedstead. The rope fell to the ground with a jerk, and she stood with the tasselled holder in her hand looking at me with inquiring eyes.

'Really,' she laughed, seeing that I looked vexed, 'the bells don't matter a bit. Every-

thing in the house that really matters is first-rate. It is all beautifully clean and the smell of paint is nearly gone.'

I was thankful for a word of commendation and promised to have the bell-wires looked after at once. Tea was brought to us by a smart young parlourmaid who I was told had given a month's notice the previous evening because there were rats in her bedroom, but had since been seen with Con Duggan, our good-looking under-gardener, engaged in setting traps, and had decided to stay. One thing Miss Williamson said when we were having tea pleased me very much. 'If we had bought the place, if we were new people coming to take possession of your old family home, I couldn't bear meeting you here. I should hate myself and feel an intruder. As we are just temporary tenants on a sort of picnic, I don't mind; but if there is any room you have any old feeling about and don't want touched, I wish you would tell me.'

I thanked her gravely. 'It is all haunted for me,' I said, 'haunted with pleasant ghosts. I meet them here, the boy that used to be myself among them.'

'Do they bring you "perpetual benedictions"?'

'They do, even when they are sad.'

'I cannot imagine a more delightful scene for one's first memories,' she said reflectively. 'I am in love with the place, but this old house and the great yards and farm buildings seem to call for the old family.'

'I hope my cousin, Miss Falcon, will live here,' I remarked.

'And this flowering wilderness,' she continued, 'is better than any fine garden; and, beyond it, every bank with its hawthorn and gorse is a delight, and the river and the distant mountains and the old tower over there. I wish I were going to stay here.'

'But are you not?' I asked.

'Off and on perhaps, when Colonel Fremington is here; but when Parliament is sitting and he is in London I have to be with him. He is away on the Falcons' yacht just now.'

'And when will you come and see my tower?' I asked.

'Your tower?'

'Yes. I live there. Will you come to-morrow?'

She read from her notebook. '"Bank and tradespeople, Mallow. Registry office, Cork. Wages." I understand from the lease that you pay gardeners' wages and will send me an account for any hauling or other work we want done. "Kitchenmaid." That's settled.' She rose. 'Perhaps you wouldn't mind walking round the yards with me and showing me where everything is and telling me the people to speak to if I want anything done; who will drive the maids to church, and which is the boy to clean knives and boots and so on.'

A good deal had certainly been left for her to arrange, but she did not seem at all disturbed

by the anticipation of difficulties and evidently took great interest in the work she had in hand.

'I shall be writing to Annette,' she said before we parted. 'Have you any message for her?'

I could think of no message that would quite express my feelings. 'I will write to her myself,' I said, 'if you will tell me where to find her.'

She gave me the address of her parents in a suburb of Birmingham.

'You haven't told me where your people live,' I said.

'And why on earth should I?' she laughed. 'As to your invitation to see your tower, I'm afraid I must go to Cork to-morrow, but I'll be delighted to come on Thursday, and I'll promise you not to be troublesome or say a single word about business.'

I was very reflective that evening. I thought a good deal about Annette, perhaps more about her cousin. I seemed to have fallen in love with my restored picture of Annette, and yet when my fancy revived that meeting of long ago it was hardly Annette who was with me. The girl I saw was taller, her face had more character, her figure fuller, lovelier curves. I was dreaming of my old sweetheart and looking at her cousin.

Next morning I had a visit from young Fitzgerald, who brought word, not to be trusted to the post, about the arrangements for the gun-running adventure. Madame Aguilar's yacht had arrived at Queenstown, and would sail two days later for

a rendezvous on the coast where the schooner laden with arms would meet her. I was expected to join the yacht and make preparation for receiving some cases, supposed to contain agricultural stores, which might arrive by road addressed to me. Madame was on board the yacht; Mr. Barry had been out to her making arrangements; he, Fitzgerald, had also been on board; she was lying unsuspected close to a British cruiser in the harbour. The boy was sparkling with excitement.

In the afternoon I felt the opposing currents in our political waters. I went by appointment to Fountains to negotiate for the purchase of a Kerry bull from Colonel MacMahon, and had to listen to a lecture on the state of Ireland, a caution against yielding to the agitation for higher agricultural wages, and a denunciation of all politicians and my cousin Brian in particular.

'You'd think to hear them talk,' said he, 'that they were better Irishmen than ourselves—jackeens out of towns, school teachers and shopboys and blackguards with the bestial blood of Cromwell's soldiers in them, and names they've faked to look Gaelic with half the letters of the alphabet, and can't pronounce. Here am I a MacMahon, and you a Quin, who've been in the place three or four thousand years, or it may be more, and they call us the English garrison because we try to protect our Irish property from fellows who prefer robbery to work. But they're not going to bully me. I mean to fight 'em.'

I said something about the National ideals and

the possibility of identifying ourselves with them, and leading instead of opposing public opinion, which sounded absurdly tame and unconvincing in the context and irritated the old man still more.

'Lead them!' he exclaimed. 'Is it follow them you mean? I worked for years on the Board of Guardians and spoke my mind and put my foot on jobbery, and they've turned me out and put in a grocer from Kanturk. I caught a fellow poaching salmon in my river the other day. Would I lead him? I drove him, my boy! I drove him out with an ash stick, and when he was in the road he turned and shook his fist at me, and says he, "You'll pay for this. Thank God the days of the ty-*ranny* are over." These are our patriots, the fellows who don't want to work and don't want to pay, and men like your cousin Brian Barry, who ought to know better, are backing them.'

I was not without sympathy for him. I liked him and people of his class, but I knew they had failed to take the only course by which they could have retained their influence and helped the country. They were wrong, and I could not but respect their courage. I had joined the other side. I was about to take part in a gun-running adventure, but disliked the prospect cordially. I wished that I could stand aside from these political activities and get on with my work and give attention to the things that really mattered to me—farming, bird-watching, Annette's cousin.

'I'll be over to see Fremington,' said the Colonel, 'as soon as he turns up. I knew him in

my soldiering days when I was in the 18th. I hear some of the family have already come, and I suppose that was his daughter I met driving into Mallow this morning in the rain. I knew the Ballyquin side car. A fine girl.'

'No,' I replied, 'that was Miss Williamson, his secretary.'

'The devil it was. Not a bad selection, eh? Now I'll lay odds she marries him. Pretty secretaries of widowers, eh?'

The suggestion annoyed me extremely. It would be absurd to suppose I had fallen in love so suddenly, but the feeling I had was very like jealousy.

One of our freshest and most beautiful mornings followed the day of rain, and if I had had the whole year to choose from I could not have found an afternoon that would have welcomed a guest more pleasantly to my ruins.

It was a very late season, accompanied by an unusual profusion of bloom. The glory of the furze was over, but the whole country was a bridal array of whitethorn and crab-apple blossom. I shall always associate the may blossom with my visitor, who, dressed in white herself, seemed the very embodiment of its freshness and sweetness. Surely I must have been falling in love to conceive such a fancy about the girl I saw pushing her way through the laden boughs on the river-bank, and stepping down to the crossing-stones of the ford, instead of thinking of her as Colonel Fremington's secretary.

Each time you show a place to a visitor you

see it with new eyes, perhaps appreciating it more or less according to your companion's view. I never loved my ruins so much as when I looked at them with Annette's cousin. Her delight in the place was exhilarating, and showed itself directly she had crossed the stepping-stones and looked along the path that ran between the river-bank and the grassy plateau with its outcropping limestone rocks on which the buildings stood. No gardener's hand had touched the place, but no garden was more beautiful in that season of wild flowers. Never before had I seen so many clusters of primroses blooming so late in the shade of the little dells between the rocks. On the slope the grass was almost hidden beneath masses of daisies and dandelions. On the opposite bank of the river the meadows were flowering to the water's edge, and the flags were just coming into bloom. On the old earth-bank beyond the buildings the whitethorn and crab-apple made a fragrant wall to the grass-grown cloisters, and among the fallen stones grew foxgloves still in bud.

I took my visitor into every corner of the ruins. I showed her the columbarium, where she admired its proportions, counted the pigeon-holes, and disapproved of its conversion into a wine cellar. She, like Michael Byrne, pictured the beauty which a flutter of wings would give to the place, and almost got a promise from me to restore it to its original purpose, though I had no use either for pigeons or their eggs. We walked along the grass-grown nave of the abbey church and explored the cloisters, where I showed her a stone

inscribed with a Celtic cross and the words *OR DO CHUIN*, which I had learned signified 'Pray for Quin'. My tower I kept until the last. It had been partly hidden by the walls of the abbey ruins, and as we passed to the end of the cloisters and round to the front of the cottage, it came suddenly into full view. Rising nearly sixty feet sheer out of the water of the lough, it certainly looked imposing, and I appreciated the little exclamation of surprise and delight which my visitor gave on seeing it. Though the obvious approach was by the little causeway connecting it with the shore, I preferred to take her in by the entrance of the water gate, so we pushed off in the boat which was moored under the bank. A little channel of deep water ran from the lough through beds of reeds to the archway that opened into the vaulted chamber at the base of the tower. It was like entering a cave. The sunlight pouring through the arch lighted the water under the keel of the boat and round the stones on the floor of the chamber with magical hues of green and purple, and threw reflected gleams on the vaulted roof, which was covered with mosses and lichen. I was not at all surprised to hear my companion's comment that it was like the entrance to a tower in wonderland, and in our further progress up the winding stone stairway there was nothing to disturb that first impression. We paused to look in on the first great chamber. I had not attempted to repair it, and it remained almost as when it had been occupied by Mickety Mack, grim and bare, lighted only from narrow slits in the walls. My

guest looked at me in amazement. 'You don't mean to tell me you're going to live here?' she exclaimed; but when we got up to the top floor and entered the noble chamber filled with light from the mullioned windows, when she saw the great stone fire-place and the oak panelling, and the bookcases on which Connors and Nihil were at work, when she climbed a few more steps and we came out on to the roof of the tower and looked out from the battlements on the country stretching away to the distant mountains, and heard the sound of the lake water lapping below us—then she understood my choice of a home.

The wind was fresh from the west, the blue waters of the lough were rippled with little waves. The beauty of the whole scene affected my companion's spirits; all her sedateness was gone, she praised everything she saw, laughed at the least pretext, and talked to me with a natural freedom and familiarity which I found very pleasant. I told her that on warm nights I had my camp bed on the roof, having got accustomed to sleeping in the open when I was in New Zealand.

'What about the winter?' she asked. 'Won't the tower be very lonely on stormy nights?'

'Lonely? No,' I replied. 'Picture coming in after shooting or hunting or farm work, and my room with a big fire of turf, and the dogs lying on the hearth, and my books all round me, and the cosiness of it with the wind outside buffeting the strong walls. But I am not going to think about winter now. I believe this is the best time of the year, and this is the best day of

the best week of the best year in the best country in the world.'

'Oh, so do I!' she exclaimed. 'You want to keep it and make it your own and be part of it—not to think of it going away, or that we are going away from it. I'd like to be that may-tree down there and feel the wind blowing through the boughs.'

'And I'd like to be that wind,' said I, looking at her with admiration; and she laughed and blushed a little, and again brought back to me a vivid recollection of Annette.

After we came down from the tower we took the boat out on to the lough. Coots slipped through the reeds, a heron rose on slow wings, we had a peep of two broods of wild duck among the flags at the river-mouth, a sedge-warbler was singing perched midway on a great rush, and though we rested not ten yards away it continued singing to us undisturbed. The time passed very quickly, and it was later than the hour I had told Mrs. Begley to expect us for tea when we returned.

'It always gives me a happy feeling,' said Annette's cousin, 'to see places where the people and the places seem part of each other. How much more interesting a house is when the same family has lived in it for generations. In the town you never feel it.'

'And do I seem like part of my ruins?'

'Indeed you do. I can see how you love them.'

She seemed puzzled when I asked if she

thought you could love equally well without possessing, and I had to explain that I had a friend who said he could appreciate my ruins as much as if they were his own.

'That's only because you are his friend,' was her comment. 'If you were his enemy he would either envy you or take no interest in the place.'

'But if it belonged to the public?'

'Ah, what nonsense!' she exclaimed; and I found when I knew her better that this rather impatient dismissal of a view that seemed opposed to common sense was very characteristic of her. She had broad and clear conceptions of life, but no interest in subtle questionings and analyses of modern thought.

On a floor of short grass outside the cottage Mrs. Begley had set the tea-table covered with one of our whitest cloths, and laden with the home-made bread and soda cakes that never failed to win the approval of my guests. It is always a lady's part to pour out tea, even when she is not the hostess, and I found a particular pleasure in watching Miss Williamson presiding at my table. Rua, my setter, and my black cocker spaniels apparently did so also, perhaps because they thought there was more chance of a contributory mouthful from her than from me.

'It reminds me,' I said to her, 'of having tea with Annette. It was at a wayside inn the day we met on our walking tour.'

'Were there any others there?' she asked.

'Oh yes, she had a friend with her—a pretty

girl whose name I forget—and my cousin Brian Barry was with me.'

'Not the Mr. Brian Barry who has become so notorious lately in Irish politics? Annette will be interested.'

'Well,' I went on, 'there was a long white table-cloth underneath which I found her hand, and she did not take it away.'

'Oh, Annette never told me that,' said she. 'And are you not telling secrets you should keep to yourself? I really think it was rather bold of her with a stranger.'

'We were young,' I said complacently.

'Yes,' she agreed, 'and away for a holiday. Poor Annette was in a shop then, I remember. I am sure she was glad of a little freedom. I have had to work for my living too.'

'A very good thing for young women,' I said sententiously.

'We belonged to the class of girls who have to earn their living,' she said. 'I don't know whether Annette told you anything about our family. Her grandfather—of course he was mine too—was a small farmer in Antrim.'

'And her mother was from the south,' I said.

'Yes; they were MacCarthys.'

Though I was interested I did not like to question her about her own parents, but I inquired as to which side she gave her sympathies in our political problems.

'Oh,' she laughed, 'when I hear your Nationalist patriots raving about the blood of the Manchester martyrs and threatening to compel the

north to come under a Government they object to I am the grand-daughter of the Antrim farmer, a black Protestant, a covenanter; and when I hear Tory politicians speaking of Irish independence as a thing to be whipped out of the country by English force I am almost a Republican. But why cannot we be more sensible? Why cannot we be friendly? I find that all the Irish people I know from north or south love their country intensely, and surely that ought to bind them together.'

'It ought,' I replied; 'it doesn't, but it perhaps gives some hope for the future. I'm glad you're not a politician. I was afraid that as secretary to a Member of Parliament you might be.'

'And I'm glad too that you're not one,' she rejoined. 'I think birds are much more interesting.'

We found a good deal to say to each other. There was a personal note in our conversation, a touch of familiarity which is unusual between new acquaintances, and might have been accounted for on my part by my memory of Annette, the feeling I had that I might have been talking to Annette herself. And there was such a welcome, such an invitation to comradeship in her face! It gave me a glow of pleasure just to look at her—not that she had any striking beauty, no vivid fascination like Trenta's, no queenly perfection like Mary's. It was not her beauty, though no one could have denied that she was good-looking, it was the woman in her—that expression of

woman's attraction which no other face or form could have given, that reached my heart.

So you see I was in love. I had no doubt about it myself when I was alone that evening. The delightful and disturbing sensation was unmistakable. I wondered what she thought of me and was glad to recall her friendliness. I tried but was unable to remember if she had worn a ring that should be a notice of warning to trespassers. When I was pacing my walk along the river-bank in the twilight the glimpse of a white figure beyond the trees in the Ballyquin garden nearly sent me there and then to decide my fate; but I was not so young as when I had rashly proposed to Annette after a couple of evenings' acquaintance, and I choked the impulse and went indoors to continue a chapter of my book—not with much success.

It was a curious thing that though I was in love with Annette's cousin the vision of her did not eclipse the picture I treasured of my old sweetheart—indeed, it revived a sweet memory. The breath of the new love rekindled a glow of the old that had remained treasured unknown to me in my heart. When I went to my bedroom some whisper of the past sent me to a drawer, seldom unlocked, where I kept the beautiful long tress of hair that Annette had given me.

CHAPTER XVI

GUN-RUNNING

Next morning I received a letter asking me to join the yacht at Passage that afternoon. I also had a visit from Aunt Margretta and took her over to Ballyquin, where I introduced her to Miss Williamson, who we found giving directions for the disposal of a van of furniture that had just arrived. The two ladies made friends promptly, and my aunt's offer of assistance and advice as to servants and other household matters was gratefully accepted. 'Mr. Quin has done all he possibly could for me,' she said. 'He even got me a kitchenmaid who appeared this morning with her mother in a donkey cart sitting on her box and wearing a fashionable hat.'

'Her best, of course,' laughed Aunt Margretta. 'That was proper respect.'

A glance at her hand had given me much relief, though it was, of course, possible that the ring might exist and had only been left off while she was at work. I was very glad to see her and my aunt together, and reluctantly said good-bye and went off in my pony cart to defy the power of the British Empire.

I could have wished that a different date had been fixed for our gun-running expedition, or that I had not consented to take part in it. Love had provided me with a much more interesting adventure, one to pursue without delay; and I was impatient at the prospect of two or three days' absence from Ballyquin without the possibility, which had to be faced, of finding myself for an indefinite period within the walls of Mountjoy or Kilmainham prison. I had no thought of turning back from the course I had taken. The movement was justifiable; Ireland had as good a right to its volunteer force as England; the North had equipped itself; it would have said little for our spirit if we had not made our protest in action. But the affair did not seem to me of great importance or significance, rather something in the nature of an escapade that appealed more to my spirit of adventure than to my patriotism, and in meeting Brian my mind was more occupied with the thought of his fortunes and his relationship with Trenta than with the enterprise we were engaged in. The *Stella*, a steam yacht of five hundred tons flying the American flag, was lying in the river opposite Passage West. I hired a boat to take me across to her, and found Brian awaiting me at the top of the gangway steps. There were a few other men on deck, but no sign of special activity.

'Well, here you are!" said he. I was not sure of you until I saw you. You don't usually do reckless things.'

'I prefer my daily routine,' I answered, 'but I am with you in this job. When we get the

arms I don't undertake to join in using them until I feel my wrongs more acutely than I do at present. I shall have to be convinced of my sufferings just as the ordinary man has to be convinced of his sins. The Church tells him of his sins, and he is incredulous.'

'Well, here you are! You have made a start. We won't ask too much from you at present,' Brian laughed. 'You will meet some interesting men, two of them, Steele and Donovan, very valued friends of mine.'

Most of the yacht's company were below, but some students from the University were on deck. Patrick Steele, the author, expected with two or three friends from Dublin, had not yet come on board. Of a group sitting in the stern one was Wilson Manning, an Englishman who had married an American lady and had thrown himself into the Irish cause; another was John Donovan, a leader of the Irish Labour party; another Professor Blake, a colleague of Brian's. Walking the deck were two men—one a German or Austrian, von Allenberg, the agent through whom the sale of the rifles had been negotiated; the other Michael Farrell, the chief organiser of the volunteer movement in Cork. I knew the name of Patrick Steele, but the others, most of them to become afterwards familiar throughout Ireland, were at the time unknown to me.

'Do we want Englishmen?' I asked Brian, referring to Manning.

'Sometimes they become more Irish than the Irish themselves.'

'I doubt if a bad Englishman makes a good Irishman. He might, if he disapproved of his own country, try and reform it, not ours. And Madam Trenta? Is she here?'

'She is at present having tea on board the Admiral's flagship at Queenstown.'

I showed my astonishment.

'Yes,' he said, 'she is wonderful. She met the Admiral somewhere—Copenhagen, I think. They exchanged calls. She is visiting the enemy's camp, and I am sure enjoying the ruse immensely. We shall be quite unsuspected.' He led me to a part of the deck where there was no chance of our being overheard. 'When I last saw you,' he said, 'I told you that I had asked Trenta to be my wife. She has not yet consented. Do not ask me any more about it. When there is anything to tell, you will be the first to hear.'

He introduced me to those of his friends who were on deck, and then ordered tea for me in the saloon and left me to my meditations. Brian's manner in speaking of Trenta perplexed me: it was unemotional, matter of fact. Of one thing I was convinced: a relationship in which he was to be her lover without the responsibilities of a husband, and by avoiding marriage elude the provisions of Don Aguilar's will, was one he would not consent to accept. I was sure that Brian had been carried away by passionate impulses, and had formed this relationship hoping, nay, believing, that though she had refused to marry him before it existed, she could not do so afterwards.

Apparently she had remained uninfluenced by it, deaf to his appeal, and though this may have confounded him it did not surprise me. Apart from the question of her fortune, I saw in her a woman who wanted a lover—lovers—and not a husband; who was capable of passion rather than love; who would find imprisonment, not shelter, in a home.

I was curious to see them together, but when she came I had no enlightenment. She returned in the Admiral's pinnace, and was evidently on very friendly terms with the officer in charge of it. '*A bientôt*,' she waved to him as she stepped on to the yacht's gangway; 'I wish you were coming with us for a cruise.'

She wore a yachting costume and looked very attractive. 'Ah, Mr. Nicholas!' she cried as she saw me, 'Mr. Philosopher, Mr. Hermit! You are indeed welcome; I knew we could count on you.'

She passed to greet other friends. Her spirits were gay. She was evidently enjoying the occasion. She was the central figure, in the place she demanded. Here was a stirring adventure. She was its queen.

Patrick Steele with his friends arrived soon after Trenta. He and Brian, who seemed to be on terms of cordial comradeship, spoke to each other in Irish. They went together almost immediately to the captain's cabin, and within half an hour we were under way. I was in the dark as to the details of our plans beyond the fact that we were bound for a rendezvous at sea where we

were to meet a little cargo steamer and take the arms on board. Except the engine-room staff, we carried no regular crew, and the work of transhipment was to be done by those of us who had enlisted for the service. The green shores of the harbour shone pleasantly in the June evening sunshine, and Queenstown and the grey spire of the cathedral rose before us in the golden light. Half-a-dozen warships were at anchor in the roads, and steering close to the Admiral's flagship we dipped our stars and stripes and the compliment was returned. The Admiral himself, standing with some of his officers on deck, was on the look-out for us, and Trenta kissed her hand to him as we passed.

'Oh, but this is great play-acting,' said the big German, von Allenberg, who was standing near me, and he shook with laughter.

And soon Crosshaven and the Forts and Roche's Point were passed, and we saw the receding shores grow darker and the great seaway glimmering before us in the twilight. As darkness fell, the spirit of romance awoke in me. The sea itself always leads the imagination to the expectation of adventure; and though no mark remains on the surface to record its stirring traditions, the enchantment of the dream that man has seen beyond the shores where he sows and reaps and builds lives for ever in its heaving billows and starlit plains. Nearly every one had come on deck. The shadowy forms, the low voices brought back scenes I remembered in boyhood. I felt a boy again myself, my fellow-

feeling being with young Fitzgerald and the other students whose pulses were tingling with excitement in the adventure, rather than with the seniors who were concerned with the result.

Before supper, which was fixed for a late hour, I was one of the six who met in Brian's cabin for a conference on our plans. Trenta was not with us but remained on deck with von Allenberg. A discussion which followed gave me a clear view of the aims of the extreme party in Irish politics, and an insight into the mind of one of its chief leaders, Patrick Steele. He could not be called a politician, nor would I describe him as a fanatic, but he was a zealot. He was moved by a burning faith in the righteous cause of Ireland's freedom which prevented his seeing any other goal in life, or turning aside from any barrier that stood across the path which led to it. He was of the stuff of which martyrs are made. In the talk which took place I saw the essential difference between his character and Brian's.

'We have taken a step at last,' said Steele; 'we must go on in the same direction, arming and drilling, arming and drilling.'

'Of course drilling will be prohibited,' said one of the party.

'Then,' said Steele, 'we should seize the occasion, and it must be rebellion. What better occasion could we have than the insult to our nationhood which would be given in denying us the right to bear arms?'

'Steele is always eager to lead a rebellion,'

Brian said with a smile; 'but we are not going to let him throw his life away. The country is not ready for a rising. How would your people feel about it, Donovan?' he asked the Labour leader.

'They don't care a damn about our ideals,' he answered. 'Their families are half starved, the tenement houses they live in in Dublin are the foulest homes in Europe, and they don't forget last winter and the lock-out. If they fight, it will be for the right to live. They laugh at our dreams, and they hate the bourgeois. They won't fight for Home Rule. They might for a Workers' Republic.'

'Home Rule!' cried Steele scornfully; 'we are none of us going to fight for a condition more contemptible than the Union. The Union is a sort of marriage, but Home Rule under British superintendence is a shameful relationship in separate establishments. That is concubinage. Pah!'

'We must get our guns and learn to use them before we think of rebellion,' said Blake.

'There can be no rising,' said Brian, 'until the whole heart of the nation is stirred. Make no mistake about it: we are not Ireland. We are only a crusade of Irishmen preaching to Ireland, interpreting her to herself, awakening her. But Ireland is not ready, not united. Your men' (he spoke to Donovan) 'are discontented. There are five hundred thousand peasant proprietors and small farmers who are contented; their fight for the land is won. They must be

made discontented while Ireland is disgraced by the condition of the labourer and while thousands of their countrymen are being driven to emigrate every year. There are British regiments quartered all over the country, and the tradespeople are glad to have them here because of the money they spend. A rising may be necessary, but it cannot be yet. The country must first know its leaders. We are not its leaders yet. We are the leaders of a chosen few, a band that is growing larger every day; but rebellion now would be only one more glorious failure to add to those of our past history. Who would be those to make the sacrifice? The best of our young men. Though my heart is with you, I could not take the responsibility of sending these young lives to certain death.'

A message from Trenta, who wished to see Brian, closed the discussion—I think to the relief of every one, for it had brought us to the realisation of issues that were painful to contemplate.

The night was falling on a tranquil sea. We were steering a south-westerly course, and were some way from the coast. The lights of an outward-bound liner shone in the distance. I looked through the skylight of the smoking-room, where the boys were in hilarious talk at their supper. Every few minutes one of them went on deck to find whether there was anything to report. They were realising the dream of all boys: they were buccaneers, they were patriots, they were hero-worshippers and their heroes were with them, and Trenta had been down to see them. After

this, would they ever be able to settle down as sober citizens?

After half an hour's walk on deck the bell for supper was a welcome sound. It was a picnic meal with no steward in attendance; and though champagne was provided to the evident satisfaction of the German gentleman, every one else, except Trenta and myself, drank coffee. Von Allenberg, a big, florid man with a fair beard, was in a mood of cynical good humour, and led the conversation in excellent English. He raised his glass and bowed his compliments to Trenta, and then drank success to our expedition. He and Trenta had some animated talk about mutual friends in Vienna. Brian was telling Steele about his American visit, Donovan and I discussed the position of the agricultural labourer, Manning and Regan the attitude of the Irish Parliamentary party to the volunteers. We were half-way through our meal before a remark of von Allenberg drew us to a general attention.

'Ah, what a harbour!' he said, referring to Queenstown. 'If Germany had naval bases like that what could she not do? We are shut in. We have no sea outlet. How fortunate is England in having such harbours.'

'This is Ireland, not England, sir,' said one of the party.

'Ah, but you belong to England, my friend,' replied the German.

'Our harbours! yes. Our soul is our own, Herr Baron,' said Trenta.

'Yes, madame, it is so,' he responded; 'it is

the privilege of little nations to have souls; it compensates for their weakness, as with Christians. Little peoples, Poland, Belgium, Bulgaria, Ireland, even Ulster have souls. Germany has no soul. The United States has no soul. Britain has no soul. They need them not; they have strength, they have power.'

Steele's eyes flashed angrily. 'You are right,' he said. '*Belong* to England, that is the word. And we shall continue to belong to her until we turn talk into action.'

Von Allenberg seemed much amused. 'Good!' he exclaimed. 'It is good. You go to get four thousand rifles. But no, sir, you will belong to England until that day when England is beaten in war by Germany.' He looked round to see the effect of his remark.

'And then,' said I, 'I suppose we shall belong to Germany.'

'Ah, no,' he answered with a smile, 'we would not wish it. Your harbours, perhaps, but not you. And what would a few harbours count in exchange for glorious freedom?'

The man's tone of cynical patronage was exasperating, and I was not surprised to hear Brian's reply. 'We do not deceive ourselves, Baron. We know that Germany does not care two straws for Ireland's freedom, otherwise she would not have helped so readily to arm and drill Ulster to oppose it.'

'It is true,' said von Allenberg more seriously. 'We have done this. Now we supply you. Both will help to occupy England.'

'You mean in the event of a war in Europe?' Manning quickly asked.

He ignored the question and addressed Brian. 'You doubt Germany's sympathy with Ireland? You do not think it worth while to cultivate an understanding with Germany? And yet some knowledge of your country's history tells me that it was your policy in the past to ally yourselves with England's enemies. Who does not know of your Wolfe Tone's reception by the Directory? But was France thinking less of her own interests or a blow to England than of your freedom?'

Steele, who had been listening attentively, was the first to speak. 'England's enemies are always Ireland's friends,' he said. 'Would a man with Wolfe Tone's mission get a hearing in Berlin?'

'England's enemies are always Germany's friends,' replied von Allenberg with a smile.

'We do not forget the friendship of France,' said Brian, 'and we cannot think that France does not cherish the memory of the Irish brigades.'

'Times change,' observed von Allenberg coolly. 'France serves you no longer. France is the ally of England. I ask again, have you thought of an understanding with Germany? I have the honour to be in close touch with our Government. Here, now, on this ship, out of our present adventure something might be born.'

I saw an acknowledged acceptance of Brian's leadership in the look that was turned to him.

'Germany's aims are Imperial,' he replied coldly, 'Ireland's are independent. It is from

within, not from without, we must look for salvation.'

The German shrugged his shoulders. Trenta showed disapproval. 'We do not undervalue your friendship, nor do we distrust its sincerity, Baron,' said she.

'And you, madame,' he responded, 'have done more than all your countrymen to make the German people know and love Ireland. Your voice, which is the voice of Ireland, has reached our hearts.'

She swallowed the gross flattery, and smiled her acknowledgement with a flush on her face.

'And you think there is really a probability of war?' she asked excitedly.

'Madame,' he answered deliberately, 'it is inevitable. And when that day comes may my country and yours have a common enemy.' His air of cynical good humour had changed. He refilled his glass and raised it. '*Der Tag*,' he cried, '*Der Tag*.'

Brian looked unconcerned. I think Steele swallowed some coffee; no one but Trenta responded.

'*Der Tag*,' she echoed enthusiastically.

I pushed my glass from me and rose. 'Will madame permit me to retire?' I said, bowing to Trenta.

She laughed gaily. 'Ah, Mr. Nicholas! you love Ireland well, but you have not learned sufficiently to love England's enemies. That will follow.'

She rose herself, evidently anxious to prevent

the recurrence of a discordant note. 'I am going on deck to see if there is any sight of our ship,' she cried. '*A l'adventure.*'

The stars were shining over quiet seas, our course was now southerly, and in the distance astern the lights of the Old Head of Kinsale flashed faintly. Nearly every one was on deck, walking to and fro or standing in little groups. Passing the drawing-room deck cabin I saw Trenta lying on a sofa smoking a cigarette, and Brian standing beside her. I could not see his face, but on hers was the smile of the enchantress. She had said something at supper to von Allenberg about her immediate departure for the Continent to fulfil some theatrical engagements. Was she trying to beguile Brian to go with her? Next time I passed, the curtains of the cabin window were drawn. How I hated this bondage into which he had fallen. I was convinced that there was no union of hearts between them, and that it was the tyranny of sex of which he had complained to me so bitterly, and not the free choice of the spirit that directed him. Her attitude to the relationship I could understand better than his. She had made him her lover and it was all she wanted. I remembered her contemptuous words to me when we were walking together by my river. 'The common mass of mortals may need the law or religion to protect their love. They are poultry to be guarded. For the nightingale, for the eagle, there must be no cage.' And I remembered Brian's words, 'I have asked Trenta to be my wife; she has not yet consented,' and I

understood that he felt bound to her, believing and hoping that she would consent. Beyond a feeling of certainty that the present relationship was one he would not continue, I was perplexed, and as I could not understand, I dismissed the problem from my mind, and went with a deck-chair, a rug, and my pipe to a quiet spot in the bows to dream about my own lady.

There are few things so pleasant as falling asleep on the deck of a ship on a warm starlit night. The sound of the wind in the rigging, the lap of the waves against the dipping bows, and the wash of the water running along the ship's sides make the loveliest of all slumber songs, reaching perfection when it is a sailing-ship that is bearing you, and there is deep ocean under the keel, and southern stars shine above the masts; but delightful also when the muffled rhythm of engines mingles with the sound of wind and sea. You are beguiled to sleep, and yet so love the song and the movement and the sweet air and the open sky that you cherish the moments of wakefulness, until at last the music passes into a dream. I dreamt I was sailing in the old ship that had taken me to South Africa in my youth, and Annette was with me, looking as I had seen her when we went through the English fields together, and we were bound, not outward, but homeward to Ireland and my tower in Desmond. I don't think I could have slept for long, but when I was awakened by sounds of activity on deck the first light of the dawn was in the north-

east, and I saw ahead of us the clear outlines of the little cargo steamer towards which we were heading. A whistle and an order of 'all hands on the after deck' brought the ship's company together, and after the captain had given a few general directions we were divided into gangs, and received instructions as to our work and the holds and cabins into which the guns and ammunition were to be transferred. The sea was so calm that we were able to run up alongside, make fast to the steamer, and throw out gangways from our deck to hers, which greatly facilitated our work. No other ship was in sight, our adventure was at this point attended with no danger, but nevertheless there was an awakening of excitement, a thrill of the forbidden about it which every one felt. The possibility of the appearance of a watchful destroyer, and the importance of escaping the notice of passing shipping and getting our job done quickly added a zest to our labour, and sent us all running to and fro on the gangways for an hour or so in a way that amused von Allenberg, who looked on, smoking a cigar. He left us and went on board the steamer, bound, I believe, for Antwerp, just after sunrise, when the last rifle and box of ammunition had been transferred. After this we cruised for a while in a westerly direction, and it was not until later in the day, when we had again changed our course, that we knew our destination.

I had expected that our plan would have been to smuggle our cargo in small boats at some

previously selected spot on the coast, but a more daring course had been decided on. After cruising about all day we made for the harbour we had left, crossed Roche's Point just after nightfall, and, unsuspected by coast-guards or Customs—a yacht returning from a trip—we passed Spike Island and Queenstown and the warships, and anchored at our old moorings opposite Passage. Immediately afterwards a boat went ashore with Brian, Trenta, Steele, and Farrell, the organiser of the Cork Volunteers, and the skipper followed to make some arrangements about berthing the yacht on the quay-side at Passage. We heard the sounds of a motor car, which was no doubt taking Brian and his party to Cork, and after that everything was quiet. One by one the lights of the houses along the shore went out, and only those that marked the channel of the river and the riding lights on one or two ships at anchor remained. We had notice not to turn in until further instructions, but we had not very long to wait. At midnight Brian returned, and about two o'clock in the morning we left our moorings and came alongside the quay at Passage. It was all done very quietly. The little town was asleep, there were no lights on the quay; but the night was not dark enough to prevent our seeing that it was lined with men drawn up along the landing-stage, and we knew that these were companies of Volunteers who had been in readiness, and had been waiting the signal to march from Cork to meet us. Then very swiftly the unloading began, and before dawn six hundred

men who had come empty-handed were bearing rifles and belts filled with cartridges, and four wagons were loaded with the remainder of the cargo. The night watch of a steamer at the quay had brought his skipper on deck, a couple of constables looked on with friendly interest, and a few people had come out of their houses; but we had been undisturbed, and were marching in fours along the road to Cork in the first light of the midsummer morning.

There had been some difference of opinion as to the adoption of this plan, which was Brian's, instead of a concealed landing; but he had insisted on the importance of an open demonstration of the right of the Volunteers to bear arms, confident that, once equipped, the Government dared not disarm them without taking the same course with the Northern Volunteers—an impossible task. Still, there was risk, and we marched into Cork prepared to fight rather than obey. Whether the military had any intimation of our doings I cannot tell; if so, they thought it wise to take no notice, and thus avoid a difficult position such as arose a few weeks later when the landing of arms took place at Howth. There was no drum-beating or cheering crowds to greet us as we marched through the streets of Cork to the head-quarters of the Volunteers; but before many hours had passed the news of our exploit had gone abroad, not only in the city, but throughout the country and across the water. It was a challenge which the British Government, hampered by the action of the Ulster counties, dared not take up;

and though in itself an unimportant episode, its significance was pronounced and its effects far-reaching.

We were all of us in gay spirits when we met at breakfast as Trenta's guests at the Imperial Hotel. Even I, probably the least ardent rebel of the company, felt the exhilaration which comes of breaking the law without the disapproval of the conscience. Steele and Donovan were remaining in Cork with Brian for a day or two, the yacht had sailed immediately after we left her, and Trenta was leaving next morning for Dublin *en route* for the Continent, unaccompanied by Brian, whose work would have kept him back even if he had wished to be with her. I suspected that her engagements to sing at Vienna and elsewhere formed only a part of her programme and that the prospect of political intrigue was alluring her. In Vienna she had friends in high places; her renown as a singer gave her an influence which the rulers of nations knew how to make use of; no stage was too large for her, and with the part she had designed for herself I conceived that her ambition was calling her to scenes more dramatic than Ireland could at the moment offer.

Perhaps she had information from von Allenberg or other sources which made her believe in the imminence of war in Europe. To me, probably to all of us, it was a possibility with little chance of England being involved. This was in the month of June, less than two months before the stupendous thing actually occurred.

So I said good-bye to my friends, glad to be

at the end of our adventure, full of the anticipation, the fears and the excitement of a lover, little thinking how soon the course of my own quiet life was to be disturbed and all the horizons of the world blotted in darkness.

CHAPTER XVII

ANNETTE

Before a man and a woman take the momentous step of uniting their lives, it would certainly seem desirable that they should know a good deal about each other. Without going as far as Cœlebs, who, when in search of a wife, submitted the ladies whom he thought eligible to critical tests of temper, and made a point of observing them early in the morning; or holding, with the author of *Utopia*, that it is desirable to compel couples to bathe together before betrothal so that they may be fully satisfied that the tailor or milliner has not concealed any physical defects that ought to be known to intending mates, I agree with the philosopher that such persons ought to know something of each other's history and character before taking him or her for better or worse. And yet how seldom is this the case: they take it for granted that the history is satisfactory and the qualifications perfect. I was thinking of this in connection with my contemplated proposal to Miss Williamson, and the very fact that I did think about it proved that I was an unromantic lover.

I knew nothing of her history except that she was the cousin of a pretty girl with whom I had had a boyish flirtation, that she was the secretary of a Member of Parliament and a good business woman, that she was descended from Ulster farmers on her father's side and Irish gentlepeople on her mother's, and that she had to earn her own living. I knew nothing of her character except that she seemed good-tempered and practical. What did I really know of her or her past? She might have had love affairs. Probably she had, for she was nearly thirty years of age. She might have tastes that conflicted with mine; heaven knows what disqualifications! And here was I prepared without a question to take her as the one woman in the world whom I could love and honour beyond all others. I had fallen in love, I had looked into her eyes and found what I sought. Everything seemed understood, everything interpreted in their light. But what of her? I was not so foolish as to think that she had fallen in love with me; and how would she regard me? a person whom she had only seen two or three times, an odd sort of fellow who lived in a ruin and watched birds, an agent who had to be kept up to the mark about the condition of a house he had let, a man who had had a little flirtation with her cousin a dozen years ago. It was the consideration of this, the attempt to realise what she probably thought of me, and not the lack of romantic indiscretion proper to a good lover, that checked me from declaring my love at the first opportunity. I saw that to do this would be to

merit rejection. Why should she accept me, especially if she had other admirers, when she did not know me nor love me? Perhaps if she did know me she would love me, perhaps not; you never can tell! I was neither vain nor humble. I might have a good chance, but at all events I decided I must allow her to get a little more accustomed to me before I startled her by a revelation of my feelings. I thought I should like her to see me ride over a fence, riding being one of my few accomplishments, or tell her some of my adventures in our pioneer life in New Zealand, something to show her I was not a mere land agent. Instead, therefore, of going on straight to Ballyquin on my return and asking her there and then to be my wife as I had proposed to myself when I was on the yacht, I decided to be content with looking in casually to inquire how everything was going on, and then try to make arrangements for a walk or ride together on the following day.

The weather remained fine: preparations for haymaking had to be thought of and instructions given to the men, which took me over to Ballyquin in the afternoon, but I did not see my lady. After tea I was thinking of going in search of her again, when I saw her in the distance coming along the river-side. As we drew closer I saw that she wore a pink print dress and a straw hat, and looked more than ever like the picture my memory held of Annette.

'Hullo!' I cried—certainly an anticlimax in speech to the thoughts I had been cherishing.

'Hullo!' she answered.

We met, and I turned with her homewards.

'You're looking awfully like Annette,' I said with an admiring glance. 'It would make me want to rush off to see her if I didn't also want to stay here with you. I hope you haven't been lonely.'

'Oh no! This is the friendliest place in the world, and your dear kind aunt was over yesterday, and I discovered Uncle de Courcy and made friends with him, and he had tea with me and broke the cream jug; and I took advantage of your permission and went to your shelves in the cottage for a book.'

'What book did you take?' I asked with interest. I suppose this is what Cœlebs would have done with a view to ascertaining her intellectual tastes; and I am sure that if she had chosen, let us say, the poems of Mrs. Ella Wilcox, or a novel by one of our writers of abdominal fiction, I might have found it rather a severe strain on my affections, but as my library contained no books of this class the opportunity for the test did not occur.

'*Prince Otto*,' she replied.

'You like Stevenson?' I approved.

'Like him? I love him. You feel you are with a friend all the time and that *he* loves *you*. Now tell me what you have been doing.'

I gave her some account of our expedition, hoping, perhaps, that it might cast a little beam of romance on me, and show me as not altogether the land agent, but perhaps owing to some levity of my tone she did not take the affair very seriously. I thought, too, that she seemed a little pre-

occupied. We were strolling quietly along the river-bank, and suddenly she put her hand on my arm.

'Oh!' she cried, 'I cannot keep it up any longer, and I am going away to-morrow. I did it for fun, just to find out what you remembered of Annette and—and what you thought of her. Nick, you have been very dense!'

My memory is a little confused as to what I felt or said when I realised that it was Annette herself, but I know that a moment of thoughtless joy overwhelmed me. I seized her hand; I would have clasped her in my arms, but she drew back with a startled look in her eyes. Remembrance came too soon. I saw her face flushed and troubled. I remembered. I had found my old sweetheart and lost her. I think she was completely bewildered. 'You thought you were still a boy and I a girl,' she said, looking at me with an attempt to smile. 'Now let us be sensible.'

'I forgot what you told me. You said Annette was engaged. Was not that part of your make-believe?' I asked with intense anxiety.

'No, Nick. It's quite true,' she answered very gravely. 'Does it really make any difference to you?'

I believe myself to be a person of undemonstrative and philosophical temperament, but I lost my head as completely as I had lost my heart, and I am afraid I became rhapsodical. I told her that I had always loved her and had never thought of any other love, that I had a claim on her greater than any one else could have, that though another

had intervened I intended to make him face me in a fight to win her, and a great deal more to this effect. I can only recall a few words of what she said; but I saw she thought I was carried away by an impulse and deceived myself in supposing I had always loved her. 'You forgot me altogether until you saw me a few days ago, and when I am gone you will find that everything is just as usual,' was one thing she said; and I protested, 'It was only when I saw you again that I knew I had never loved any one else'; and she answered, 'But you thought I was Annette's cousin—you forgot Annette.'

The fact that she could reason with me did more than anything else to make me realise my luckless position. If she had cherished any love for me, if she had had any regret that she was not free, she would have been unable to conceal her feelings. And what possible reason had I to suppose that she should love me, or was prepared to break faith with a man to whom she was betrothed on the strength of the sudden re-appearance of a sweetheart of long ago who had never since troubled to communicate with her?

'Is it really too late?' I asked her.

'Can you ask me?' she replied. 'You know I am engaged to be married.'

'Is it to Colonel Fremington?'

'Yes.'

'Annette, I love you a thousand times more than he can,' I said impetuously, 'and you could love me as you could never love him. What else has he to give you but his possessions? They're

not him. He has lived the best part of his life, he found his love long ago, he has shared his life with another. Now I have found you again, you whose love is everything to me. If you would come to me it would be no disloyalty. If he were an unmarried man it might be different; but would it be disloyal to give up a man who can forget his wife in a couple of years and——' I pulled myself up. I realised that I was speaking unworthily and without consideration for her feelings. 'Forgive me,' I said.

I saw by her face how deeply she was distressed. 'I am very, very sorry,' she said; and then the curtain fell on the troubled scene, for we saw Aunt Margretta coming towards us waving her hand and smiling her greeting.

Annette had said something about leaving next day but had not given any reason. It seemed that Colonel Fremington had secured cabins for her and her sister on a ship that sailed in a fortnight for South Africa, and in the meantime she had to inaugurate his new secretary and make her own preparations. This I heard in a few minutes of conversation between her and Aunt Margretta, who had driven over to say good-bye, and had promised to keep an eye on the establishment at Ballyquin until the family arrived in a few days later. Annette asked my aunt to go back to Ballyquin for dinner, and as the evenings were long enough to allow her to get home in daylight she accepted.

I had a word with Annette while my aunt was speaking to Mrs. Begley. I told her I would

come over and say good-bye that evening unless she forbade me, and she said she wished me to come.

Directly they had gone I saddled my horse and rode a point-to-point race against an imaginary rival across country for an hour or so. I then had a bath, annoyed Mrs. Begley by dining on biscuits and a bottle of claret, went up to the roof of my tower, lighted my pipe, and endeavoured to reflect. I like to think of myself as philosophic. I once had heard Mrs. Begley describe me as a 'schaymer,' by which she meant nothing uncomplimentary, merely one who was deliberate in calculating the result of his actions. I began to do this now. I had flung myself, my love, my disappointment, my anger at Annette without consideration for her feelings. I had behaved in a way that surprised myself and made me feel ashamed. Now I came back something nearer to my normal reasonable condition. I tried to look steadily at the position in which I found myself. Although Colonel Fremington was an elderly man, I had not the slightest justification for assuming that Annette did not love him, nor any good reason to produce why she should love me. And he had been her generous friend and helped her family; but for him she could not have taken her sister on the voyage which alone could save her life. What had I done for her? And yet I did not intend to give up without a fight. She liked me, she had kept a romantic memory of our old meeting, she had given me a comradeship when we met again that showed more

than ordinary interest. I felt a conviction that if I had come before she had made other ties I should have won her love. I still meant to make a fight for her, but how? If she had not been going away the prospect would have been more hopeful. If we had been going to meet daily there would have been a possibility that the love that touched her heart long ago might have been rekindled, and that my one real advantage, the possession of youth, might have prevailed.

I waited till I heard the sound of the wheels of my aunt's pony carriage on the avenue, and then I went over to Ballyquin. From my deliberations no plan of action had emerged; but of one thing I felt certain, that if there were any chance at all for me it would come from the inspiration of Annette's own heart, and not from any attempt of mine to influence her.

She was in the garden expecting me, and she met me rather shyly. I saw the Annette of long ago, and it seemed amazing to me that I had failed to recognise her at once. I did my best to conceal my perturbation of spirit and, I think, succeeded in speaking in a quite sensible way. She said something about my aunt and her kindness to her, and we turned to walk down the wide garden path towards the shrubbery.

'I want to know that you forgive me for—well, for some things I said,' I began.

'I feel it is for you to forgive me,' she replied.

'What for?'

'Because I didn't tell you at once that I was Annette and that I was engaged, and because I

am unable to give you what you asked. But cannot we be friends, dear Nick, real, splendid friends?'

'Well, let's have a try. The real, splendid friend should efface himself: he should say like Mr. Toots when he was refused by Miss Dombey, "It's of no consequence"; I should tell you that I was born to be an old bachelor and live alone in a tower, and that I shall get on very well as I am. And I am a philosopher and a naturalist. Your children shall learn to call me "Uncle," and I will teach them to stuff birds.' I stopped, and we both laughed.

Force of habit is very insistent, and tricks of speech and manner assert themselves even when the heart is troubled. I was talking to Annette now in that tone of friendly banter which I had used when I was discussing the repairs at Ballyquin with Colonel Fremington's secretary, and I could see how great was her relief at the change in my manner.

'Of course you will marry,' she said. 'Aunt Margretta——'

'How pleasant it sounds to hear you call her Aunt Margretta,' I interrupted.

'She asked me not to call her Miss Quin—she said you were looking out for a wife since you came home and she had made you a list of all the most likely girls in the neighbourhood.'

This was going too far. I thought at the time she had misunderstood my tone of levity and was reassured in the belief that I had merely taken a toss without receiving injury. 'No,' I

said; 'for me there is no one but you. I want you to know that. And so it is all settled about your voyage to South Africa. I haven't told you how much I feel for you about your sister. If I had only been in time I would have married you and taken you out and looked after you both myself. Think of it! Can't you still think of it as a possibility?' I was losing my head again. 'Couldn't you dare it?'

'I think I might if I loved you differently, Nick,' she replied very seriously; 'but I want you to understand that you are talking about impossibilities. I only love you as a friend. I have given my promise to a man I trust and who trusts me, and I cannot—I don't *wish* to break my promise.'

'If only there were a chance of seeing more of you, Annette, I believe you *would* love me enough. And you are going to-morrow! Tell me, is there any possibility of your being married before you leave?'

'Oh no.'

'Perhaps I will come out to South Africa and see you.'

'No, no!' she exclaimed. 'I couldn't let you. Please, please, Nick, be reasonable and generous.'

I did not reply. I could find no words to express my feelings, no plea to make against her appeal to my generosity. I walked at her side along the familiar pathways, and I remember the scene very distinctly,—the glow of coloured sky that showed through the trees, the clamour of the rooks as they settled for the night, and the

feeling of mystery descending on the place as the light ebbed, a feeling that came from a memory of childhood.

'I have always loved you, Nick,' she said at last, 'and I always will. Not the love you ask for, but something more than just friendship.'

'My dear! my dear!' I broke out. 'The only hope I have in the world is to make you my wife. I mean to make you my wife. If you marry Fremington I will wait. It may be twenty years; he can't live more than that.' She looked at me as if to discover whether I was speaking seriously. 'And I shall still be younger than he is now. Jacob served fourteen years for Rachel.'

'Oh,' she exclaimed with a little laugh that was half a sigh, 'I am glad you are taking it like that and can be ridiculous about it.'

But I was soberly serious. 'I swear that I will marry no one but you, and if you make me wait I will do so.'

We were again silent and stood at the end of the garden looking at the fading light in the sky and the deepening purple of the mountains beyond the glimmering green of upland fields. I treasure the picture I saw of Annette there,—the outline of her head with the soft thick hair a little ruffled, her features so firm and yet so feminine, the adorable almost imperceptible uplift of her nose and upper lip, and her figure!—it upset my reason.

She made a little attempt to divert the current of our conversation, speaking of her sister and the voyage and asking me something about South

Africa; but of course she knew that I would not leave her without some return to the forbidden theme. It was getting dark: the white flowers in the neglected garden border began to be conspicuous, the rooks had stopped their talk and had settled down for the night, and there was a sweet smell in the air of the earth and dewy grass. We had passed from the garden and walked through the fields that led to my tower.

'Let us say good-bye now, Nick,' she said as we were nearing the river.

'Am I saying good-bye to Annette or to her cousin?' I asked.

'Oh,' she exclaimed unguardedly, 'I wish there were really two of us, Annette and her cousin, and then it would be all right.'

'Which of them would you choose to be?'

'Which of them would you have chosen?'

She seemed to await my reply with real interest.

'The one near me now,' I answered.

'No,' she protested, 'that would be the wrong choice. She is a new person to you. The old Annette and you were boy-and-girl sweethearts; you and she would have a sort of bond. I am another person. Annette was a girl without experience or responsibilities. I am a woman with my fortunes decided. I give you the old Annette, and her cousin shall be your friend.'

I felt she wanted to give me something, some part of herself which I could keep as I kept the tress of her hair, that she wished me to feel that our old romance was not a thing dead and buried but a joy to be retained, and that in changed

conditions and without disloyalty to new bonds we might keep it as a permanent possession. Perhaps she had not realised the full meaning of her words or considered how I might interpret them.

'This evening, then, you are my old sweetheart,' I said. 'You remember the footpath over those fields? We lost Brian and your friend and took our own way.'

'You talked about Ireland and poetry. You repeated some verses of "Love in the Valley".'

'Do you remember the lines?

> 'She whom I love is hard to catch and conquer,
> Hard, but oh, the glory of the winning were she won.'

'I know the whole poem by heart.'

'And the night was falling just as it is now, and we were walking hand in hand.'

We were close to the river among the white-thorn bushes, and I took her hand as I had done long ago. She stood still for a moment and looked at me with a quick smile, as if remembering.

'Let us say good-bye, Nick,' she said. 'This pretending things will only make it harder for you afterwards.'

'You said you would give me my old Annette just for this once,' was my answer.

'But could it be? Would you promise that it was only for this once?'

'And then,' I went on, 'we came to a heavenly place at the edge of a little stream. We heard the sound of it as we can hear it now.'

'It was moonlight,' she said.

'And you remember——' She knew I was going to take her in my arms, and she had not the strength of will or was too generous to resist.

'I won't go on remembering, Nick,' she half-whispered, 'unless—unless you give me your word it is good-bye, and you won't ever ask me to be the old Annette again, or ever remind me that I—that I showed you I did not forget our old romance.'

For a few moments I held her close to me and I kissed her, and in those few moments which she gave me she was generous. But I knew, we both knew that it was a farewell, an admission, a recognition of something that might have been, but still a farewell.

There were tears in her eyes. 'I wanted to give you something,' she said. 'It was all I had to give, and it can never be again. You must not see me again before I go. Good-bye, dear Nick, I am glad I had something I could give you.'

I could not speak, and the instant I released her she turned and ran back along the path to the house.

CHAPTER XVIII

SEPARATION

Annette had sailed for South Africa. I had a short letter, posted from Madeira, in which she told me that her sister had borne the journey well, and had been brought on deck to lie in the warm sunshine. She had received a box of books I had sent her to the ship, a selection which, though she did not know it, included some of my most cherished volumes. Her letter had the tone of affectionate friendliness, so unacceptable to a lover, who would prefer a reticence which might conceal disturbed feelings. I did not regard Annette as finally lost. My hope, my only hope, was that she loved me more than she knew, and that now she knew of my love for her she would discover her own secret. At one time I told myself that she was not the sort of girl who would have allowed such a privileged farewell unless she loved me; at another I asked whether this had not been just a sudden outburst of the generosity of her nature, the instinct to give me something that would enshrine our old romance in the hour that ended it. Time and absence

might tell in my favour if I had touched her heart; if not, it would be against me. I should become more shadowy, her engagement more real, the farther away she was from me. I had little reason really for hope, and yet I was no disconsolate lover. I could look at the whole thing philosophically. After all, I had only lost a dream, something I had never possessed; and I compared the deprivation of a happiness that might have been with the calamity that befalls a man who has lost the comradeship of a loved wife. So I accepted my misfortune without kicking; and if the look forward was less attractive than when it had constantly promised the appearance of the girl I had dreamed of, I got along well enough, and betook myself to hard work both in my business and in my writing.

Towards the middle of July Jerry Hook came to stay with me. He had never been in Ireland before, and the effect of the country on him was remarkable. He was amused, he laughed, he thought us absurd, but we disarmed his cynicism. I had never before seen him so happy, and his health improved every day with the refreshment of his spirit. A few days later Mary Falcon arrived as a guest at Ballyquin with her friend Mercy Fremington. I was expecting Brian on a visit at the time, and in reply to a letter in which I told him of Mary's arrival he said that I might expect him at the end of the week. I had written partly as a warning, thinking that he might not now wish to meet her, and his reply rather puzzled me. As to her feeling for him I was

not left in doubt: from a short conversation I had with her the day she came, I saw that she was bent on re-establishing their friendship, and in a longer talk the following day she allowed me to read her heart more clearly.

Aunt Margretta was spending the day with us, and she and Jerry, who had become great friends, and Mercy Fremington went out on the lough, while Mary and I took a walk on the mountain. We began talking about Ireland, and I gave her a description of our gun-running adventure. She was chiefly interested in hearing of the people I had met on the yacht, most of all in Trenta.

'What is it gives her such influence?' she asked. 'I understand her voice thrilling an audience, but I don't understand her influence with men of intellect.'

'A woman with beauty and charm and ambition makes a rallying-point for men,' I answered. 'A queen wins more loyalty than a king. And she is a celebrity and is rich, and has put her wealth into the national movement. As to her mind, it has no light of its own: it flashes the lights from outside like a diamond.'

'A woman like her has terrible power for good or evil. Do you think her influence is good?'

'I do not. She is unreasoning, extreme. She is vain, and craves for notoriety as a national heroine. I don't trust either her heart or her brains, but I recognise her attractions.'

'What a splendid thing it must be,' she said reflectively, 'for a woman to feel she has influence

in a great movement, to feel that she could affect it for good, helping to inspire all that was noblest in it, or to moderate its excesses.'

I wondered whether she was dreaming of what she might accomplish as Brian's wife, and if she was in fancy matching her influence against Trenta's. I thought of Annette and her view of life and duty, and contrasted the simplicity of her nature with the complexity and self-consciousness of Mary's. Whatever interest Mary took up, she threw herself into for the time wholeheartedly. There had been her championship of women's rights, which had led her into the extreme suffragist movement; her devotion to art, which had culminated and perished in her engagement to an eminent painter; her spiritual excursions, which had resulted in her joining the Catholic Church; and she had been a worker among the poor, an ardent Imperialist and Primrose dame; and now it was Ireland and everything Irish that absorbed her. In each of these adventures she had found an outlet for part of her emotional energy, but in no one of them, no nor in all of them combined, did she really express herself. The woman in her was dissatisfied. I gathered this from our conversation, and had no doubt that the struggle that had been going on between Love and her Pride of independence was becoming an unequal contest.

'A woman cannot be as independent as a man,' she said; 'her sympathy is always linking her with the lives of others.'

'And when her head, not her heart, guides

her, she almost ceases to be a woman.' I quoted Jerry Hook.

'No,' she replied, 'her heart and her head are in accord. Her heart leads and her head acquiesces. Her reason allows her heart to guide, knowing it to be more reliable. A woman cannot keep her independence and fulfil her womanhood.'

I reminded her that this was not her old view of the equality of the sexes.

'I admit, I think I always did, that a woman's intellectual powers are not equal to a man's, but that does not make her his inferior.'

'Why not? Are her moral and spiritual qualities superior?'

'At least they are equal. She holds as great a trust, she reaches as deep a faith, she gives as true a love. These things make the only standard.'

'Do they? What about brains?'

'I have heard you say yourself that man's finest mental qualities might appear utterly trivial compared with those of beings in a greater sphere, as different as an ant's from a man's; whereas you could get nothing finer or nobler in any sphere in the Universe than a great deed, an act of self-sacrifice done by a humble human being. What we are,' she went on, glowing with the eloquence of conviction, 'is something much greater than what we can make or discover. All the essential qualities that bring us into touch with the fountain springs of life, with God's purpose, belong as much to a woman as to a man.'

'Perhaps even more to her than to him,' I answered. 'I think that her instinct of motherhood shows her a light that man hardly sees. But why should she be less independent than man?'

'Because his mental power, his constructive work in the world is greater, and she knows it, and feels that his work must be hers too. And she wants to influence it, to put her own stamp on it. I think a man may achieve his goal even if his life is without a woman's love or help, but it is only through love that a woman can find her goal. That is why she is less independent.'

It was astonishing to see this beautiful, proud girl, whose independence had been a faith to her, who had claimed that her opinions, her principles, were an essential part of herself, pleading for the right of capitulation. Clearly as she reasoned it, she would never have come to such a conclusion if she had not been in love herself. Her independence had been herself, and it had something virginal about it. Now she was ready to give it away, but it could only be given to one man. It was amazing and it was pathetic, for I knew that between her and that man were barriers almost insuperable. My friendship for her impelled me to give her some enlightenment.

'You are thinking about Brian, Mary, and the gulf his political conduct places between you.'

She flushed instantly at my words, and tried to laugh off her confusion.

'You tried to be a match-maker, Nick; you told me he loved me when I questioned it. I

was hurt that he could not see my point of view and would yield nothing to it. He fought against the country I have been brought up to think of as one with our own,—and my brother was killed in the war,—and he persisted in his hostility instead of seeking for reconciliation. Can you blame me for holding to my principles?'

'Of course not.'

'Well,' she continued, 'I see now that it might be impossible to keep his influence, to carry on the work which is his life, and do what I asked him, get the King's pardon. I would not insist on that if——' she hesitated. 'If he gave me any proof that he loved me I would go a long way to meet him, and help him to serve Ireland.'

'Mary!' I said very seriously, 'take my advice and put Brian out of your thoughts as anything except a friend. I don't believe the political trouble would ever have separated you, but there is another, a real barrier.'

The colour left her face. She stood still and looked at me as if I had struck her. 'Trenta Byrne!' she said in a low voice.

'Yes,' I replied, feeling a hatred for the woman and wrath towards Brian, and a dissatisfaction with the whole world. 'I believe she has got a hold on him.'

'Do you think he loves her?'

'I don't know. She's a witch, and sex is the devil. My opinion is he doesn't love her, but he has given her a hold on him, and I wish you'd think no more about him.'

I knew how hard she was hit, and I was

proud of the brave girl and the way she steeled her heart and answered me.

'I have shown you something of my heart, Nick, but I have shown it to no one else, I am glad to say,—not to Brian. Now forget what I have said, and remember that I have regained my independence.'

Her confidence made a new bond of friendship between us. I felt drawn to her and longed to tell her my own secret, and yet I did not do so.

When we joined the others at tea we were both rather silent, but Aunt Margretta was in such good spirits, and Jerry was so amusing and talked so much, that it was unnoticed.

I told Mary before we parted that I was expecting Brian, thinking that she might be disinclined to meet him.

'What you told me,' she said, 'will make no difference to my friendship for him.'

But I had not told her all. I had no positive proof of the conclusion I had come to as to his relations with Trenta, and if I had, I should not have been justified in speaking of them.

Two afternoons later when Brian arrived we were all in the Ballyquin meadows haymaking. Taking advantage of the continued fine weather, every procurable hand from farm, stable, and garden was pressed into the work, and amateur service was also welcomed. Three Fremington girls and two schoolboy brothers, Mary, and my aunt who was staying at the house, and Jerry Hook were all working or 'making a countenance' to work. Jerry did least and protested

most. 'It is so good for us,' he said, 'to get back close to Mother Earth, to "plod in the steps of the husbandman," as Meredith says'; but his toil was intermittent, and a good deal of his time was spent sitting on a haycock smoking and encouraging the others. Mary and I had thought that Mercy Fremington, being a fellow-bard, might have attracted him; but he seemed much happier in the company of my aunt, whose simplicity and kindness of heart and unquestioning joy in life perhaps gave a restful companionship to a man of his temperament who lived with a highly strung mother and sister.

I had expected that there might have been a little constraint in the meeting between Brian and Mary, but there was no sign of it. He joined us in the field, and after an affectionate greeting with Aunt Margretta, and a word with Jerry, he came with me to be introduced to the Miss Fremingtons. Between Mary and him it was just a nod and a smile. 'Hullo, Mary!' 'Well, Brian!' as if they had met the day before. He then stripped for work, saying he was short of exercise, and he found as much as any man wants on a warm day in forking hay up into the large cocks or wynds, as we call them, which we had commenced to make in the field. After a couple of hours of this work we had a dip in my bathing pool in the river and then returned to Ballyquin, where the ladies had tea prepared for us on a long table in the garden.

Miss Fremington protested against presiding at the tea-party.

'You, Mary, or your aunt, must be hostess,' she said. 'In your own place, with four members of your family here, I couldn't think of doing it. We English are guests here. Are we not, Mr. Hook?'

'I quite agree,' said Jerry. 'I vote that Aunt Margretta pours out tea.'

'Aunt Margretta!' she exclaimed, really pleased by the familiarity.

'I would be
Thy nephew, anything to thee,'

he laughed. 'Your uncle, if you will allow, would be a more appropriate relationship.'

'Jerry's younger now than when he was a boy,' said Brian. 'Don't you remember, Nick, how fatherly he was with us when we first went to Grantry?'

'It's only in the last fortnight since I came to Ireland that I've got young, then,' he replied. 'Every one's young here.'

'Either young or old,' said Miss Fremington; 'no one is middle-aged.'

Brian made himself very agreeable to the Fremington family, and talked to the boys and the two younger girls about dogs and horses and fishing, while Jerry entertained the others by an account of a visit he had paid to Mallow with me on the previous day, and the delightful friendliness of every one he had met, from the doctor—who kept a chemist's shop, and after selling us six pennyworth of tooth-powder and some sheep dip, invited us into his parlour to taste a prescription that had been distilled twenty years ago—to the

tailor, from whom he had ordered a suit of Irish homespun.

'Brian! Mr. Hook has ordered a suit at Sheedy's. He's supporting Irish industries,' laughed Aunt Margretta.

'And such perfect manners I never met in a shop before,' said Jerry. 'No servility, but the finest courtesy. "Just be careful about the measurement of the trousers, Mr. Sheedy," I said to him, "for unfortunately the left leg is shorter than the right." "Oh, not at all, sir," says he, "'tisn't any shortness in the left leg, but maybe the right leg is just a trifle long, and that'd be of great use to you in mounting a horse." Was ever a lame man so delicately handled?'

'But don't forget your encounter with Mr. Comber,' said I.

'Oh,' Jerry laughed, 'tell that yourself, I can't do justice to his speech. Miss Fremington, you are a poet. Are you known in Mallow? I am.'

I explained that Mr. Comber was a retired baker, who was something of a scholar, a great reader and admirer of the poets, and had an amazing gift of florid speech. 'As I was anxious to increase Jerry's circulation,' I related, 'I bought a dozen copies of his last volume when I was in England to distribute among my friends.'

'Oh,' interrupted Jerry in a tone of disappointment. 'I heard that the sales had improved. Was that the reason?'

'Well,' I continued, 'I gave one to Comber, partly because I wanted to see what he would

make of it, and partly because I got his son a job in the Falcon works. I told him the poet was a member of the firm, knowing that he was greatly impressed with its importance. Now listen to his splendid appreciation.'

'And in the street,' cried Jerry, 'with a dozen people standing round.'

'I introduced Jerry, and Comber looked him up and down, stuck out his hand, and then delivered himself of these words: "Sir, the spark of your poetic genius will kindle a fire which shall gleam and glow when the furnaces of Falcon & Company are extinguished and forgotten."'

'Isn't this a country for poets to live in, Miss Fremington?' Jerry exclaimed in delight.

'They don't need poets in Ireland,' she replied. 'Everything and every one lives in an atmosphere of poetry. Poetry and pictures are for people in unbeautiful surroundings who want to read about things they dream of.'

'Poetry, then, is an expression of a dream of something beyond your reach,' said Brian with interest. 'We have beautiful surroundings, and we dream of something behind and beyond the beauty. That is the note of our poetry.'

Perhaps he saw a rather anxious look on Aunt Margretta's face which suggested that she would like to have joined in the conversation, but that it was getting a little beyond her, or he may have seen signs of impatience in the boys, for he added, 'I see two boys and two girls who are too polite to say they don't care anything about Irish poetry and want to go fishing, and I think I should

like to be allowed to go with them. Now off you go and get the rods from Mr. de Courcy.'

My uncle had been too shy to join the tea-party. He was in hiding somewhere known to the boys, who were already in alliance with him, and they rushed away to find him.

If Mercy Fremington had formed any picture of Brian as an Irish rebel, a hater of England and the English, she must have been very much surprised at the welcome he seemed to give to English intruders. I did not need her subsequent admission to tell me that she found him very attractive. He seemed to be in a holiday mood, as though he had thrown down a burden and was enjoying the warmth of old comradeship. I wondered whether his cheerfulness was superficial. Mary and I seemed cheerful too, and there was trouble in our hearts. I had a little trial to bear in hearing Annette discussed and praised by Mercy Fremington, who said she did not know how her father would get on without her. 'I sometimes thought he might marry her, but now she's gone I suppose the danger is over. Not that I should have much minded if he had. She would have made a sweet stepmother, and it would have prevented his marrying some one else who might be objectionable. I'm always afraid of that. A young father is a dreadful responsibility.'

'Of course,' I said, anxious to change the topic, 'I know what it must be. I have a young aunt.' And so our little party broke up in laughter and every one seemed happy, though some of us were not.

Jerry's complimentary attitude to things Irish did not extend to our politicians, and as to our national aspirations he confessed himself bewildered. He heard a dozen different views and expressed hearty agreement with them all. In a talk with John Nihil he gave it as his opinion that England had made every mistake within the power of human stupidity in governing Ireland, and that he thought that Ireland should have the right of misgoverning herself; with Colonel MacMahon he agreed that nothing less than ten years of Prussian rule could teach us to behave ourselves. From Johnny Weldon the horse-dealer, who had brought out a hunter for Miss Fremington to look at, he heard that plenty of English visitors spending money in the country was all we wanted. 'And you don't want Home Rule?' asked Jerry. 'Home Rule!' Johnny replied contemptuously. 'Have sinse!' He told us these experiences on the only occasion in our evening talks when the subject of politics arose, and he made them the text of a ridiculous little harangue on Irish *deals* and *ideals*, which, he said, were convertible terms. But Brian did not show the least resentment; he was evidently disinclined to discuss political matters, perhaps because he was tired and seeking a rest from some of the perplexities of our problems. 'You have been here a fortnight, Jerry. There is more to find out,' was all he said.

During the next two days Brian and Mary met only once, and then among others. He did not, I think, keep purposely out of her way, but he

made no attempt to see her. Mary, who I am sure would in the ordinary course of things have been over to my tower, did not appear. I had seen that if Brian had come to her as a lover, his political principles would no longer have stood between them, but her independence was restored by the knowledge that he had yielded to the influence of another woman. Some women in such circumstances might have set themselves to detach a man from a rival. Mary, who, when she had last seen Brian, had made him feel that his public conduct had divided their lives, might have now shown him that she regarded it so no longer. It was possible she might allow him this opening, though I did not think it likely: I could not conceive her stooping to act as a competitor. She was a girl who had to be won, and Brian had lost his chance. I think she must have gone through some struggle with her feelings and come out of it mistress of her soul, that she accepted the fact that Brian could be no more to her than a friend, and did not allow her friendship to be chilled. I judged this from her manner when next they met. We had made a party to the village schoolhouse, where the master and mistress had prepared a little entertainment for us to exhibit the accomplishment of their scholars in Irish singing and dancing. Mary and Brian walked together on the way to the school, and I noticed with pleasure how happy and free from constraint she seemed in talking to him.

At the school we were joined by Canon Brennan, our old parish priest. He was a man

we all loved, a priest who was the father of his people, almost a saint in his life, yet a human being in his understanding of his fellow-creatures, his comradeship with a sinner. He had won Mary's affection, and had found in her a valuable supporter of his work in the parish. Even Jerry was impressed by the old man. 'You people here ought all to be Catholics,' he said to me. 'It's the religion of the country. What an absurdity to call your church the Church of Ireland, with only a couple of dozen people in a parish belonging to it! In Ireland the Catholic Church is part of Ireland; it is an Irish religion, and no other country in the world could produce anything so wholly Christian as that old priest. If I lived here I'd belong to his church, that is, if I were a Christian. As it is, I can be a Protestant like the rest of you without being a Christian.'

It was a delightful performance: in the music a beauty, a sadness treasured from the past, welled up like little fountain springs in the voices of the children; and in the dancing the art was so true that it seemed a gift of nature, the movement as natural as the ripple of water or the swing of leafy branches in the wind. And these old airs, though sad, are not saddening, for whenever sorrow can find expression in beauty there is hope commingled with it. Jerry's face was lighted with genuine pleasure. I saw that Mary was touched, and that Brian saw this too, and had a look in his eyes that left me in no doubt as to his love and devotion to her. It was a great triumph for our schoolmaster and his wife.

After our entertainment Mary came back with us to discuss the plans of some little industries,—corn milling and lime burning,—which we thought of establishing in the place; and after we had had our talk Brian and she strolled off together, and I went up to my tower to feed my tame jackdaws and put some tobacco to dry on the sun-warmed stones of the battlements. Mrs. Begley, seeing Brian and Mary go away together, had said to me with her privileged familiarity, 'That's the lady for Master Brian, but I'd make bold to say that if you had any ambition you'd be courting her yourself.' Presently, from the tower, I heard her talking in rather a disputatious tone with a visitor who had asked if Brian was there.

'He is and he is not,' she replied. 'He was, and agin he will be.'

'And when will he return? Where will I find him?' she was asked.

'Phaix, he's where he wouldn't want to be found or disturbed,' she answered. 'He's out walking with the finest young lady in Ireland.'

I hailed young Fitzgerald and went down to see him. Brian had gone away without leaving an address for letters, and Fitzgerald had come on the chance of finding him with me. He had an important message, he said, from the headquarters of the Volunteers in Cork, and he also bore letters and telegrams which had arrived in Brian's absence. He brought a morning paper with alarming rumours of the European situation, and said he had heard that Madam Trenta had can-

celled her engagements in Paris and was returning to Ireland.

Brian and Mary returned very soon, and Fitzgerald remained with us for lunch. I mention his visit, which I should otherwise have forgotten, because it was my only explanation of another and more important one of a few days later, when Trenta herself appeared.

It was not the only walk Brian and Mary had alone. I began to be concerned for Mary's peace of mind, fearing that being ignorant of the real relationship between Brian and Trenta she might still be dreaming of a closer bond than friendship. Indeed I had made up my mind to have it out with Brian and insist on his telling her, if he had not done so already, that he was engaged to be married. 'I have asked Trenta to be my wife; she has not yet consented,' was all he had said to me, but as she had not consented, and as it was certain he would not accept the relationship she proposed, did he consider himself bound? If not—if he found that he had given his whole heart's love to Mary and dared to woo her, his only course would be to make a full confession to her of all that had taken place. It was thinkable, but I saw that as an honourable man—and Brian's honour I never had in a minute's doubt,—he could not reveal a secret which was Trenta's as well as his own. He could not say or suggest, 'I fell into these bonds believing that she would marry me.' It would have made him contemptible. And more than this, he had received a proof of Trenta's love for him, and she might at any time

agree to become his wife. Though he refused the relationship which she invited, he was nevertheless bound to her while she remained true to him. Believing as I did that he did not love her, that Mary was the only woman he ever would love, and that nothing but his sense of honour and duty prevented him from telling her his whole heart, I felt deeply for him, but I understood and respected his silence. What a terrible thing is this tyranny of sex attraction!—the same fire that warms the hearth, unloosed in devastating conflagration: the superb horse that needs the guiding hand, riderless in headlong career. For the man of principle and honour who succumbs to its temptation the price to be paid is incalculable: it makes one wild moment the dictator of his fortunes; it makes him pay the price of that moment with long years of his after life.

On the evening before Brian left we had a little gathering so full of comradeship that we were none of us likely to forget it. My establishment was unequal to the entertainment of a dinner-party, and I did not wish to ask too much of Mrs. Begley, whose work had been increased by my guests, but we invited Mary and Mercy Fremington to come over immediately after dinner, and we had coffee on the roof of my tower. It was a very warm evening, but the height seemed to take us into a cooler air, and it also gave us a better outlook than we should have had below on what promised to be a fine sunset sky. 'It is extraordinary,' said Jerry, 'what a

feeling of elevation you get directly you are the least bit above the level of others. This tower is not sixty feet from the ground, and yet you almost feel you are in the sky.' I knew the feeling well. At night I was half-way to the stars on that roof. Jamesy, climbing the winding steps with the coffee, must have felt it also.

We were an unusual party inasmuch as every one of us was interested in intellectual subjects. There is generally one or more in a party, consideration for whose outlook reduces the common measure of conversation to the topics of daily life. This evening we could talk of poetry without making any one feel surprised or uncomfortable; and the beauty of the scene and the consciousness to some of us of a new sadness in life attuned our spirits to serious discussion. In the west the outlines of the mountains were almost lost in the flood of low light; but in the north and east, from Ballyvonaire to Galteemore, they stood out in the bold splendour of their dark purple, the most glorious colour I have ever seen when, as now, its solid mass was rippled with rose colour. We looked and dreamed, idly conscious of the sound of pleasant rhythms while Jerry, with pauses, read to us. The poem was "Love in the Valley", which to me was full of significance, for I remembered repeating some of the verses to Annette long ago, verses that now had a new meaning.

> Sweeter unpossessed,
> Sweeter, for she is what my heart first awaking
> Whispered the world was——

So ran the verse: so perhaps I had thought then; but this devotional feeling for the maiden could only be true when unpossession was not prohibition, only possession delayed. They were sad lines to me now, and to Brian sitting there at Mary's side the words must have been as poignant as to myself. And then came that other verse, lovely and grave like the country round us in the ebbing light:

> Darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting:
> So were it with me if forgetting could be willed.
> Tell the grassy hollow that holds the bubbling well-spring,
> Tell it to forget the source that keeps it filled.

But no: with me there was no wish to forget. It was a memory that, though sad, gave me perpetual benedictions, for it breathed of true love, of a love that was possible beyond any other reward than its own inspiration; and the knowledge that this could be gave me something more of faith in life and the human heart than I had before.

When it was too dark to read we fell back on our memories and repeated verses of some of those poems that had haunted us.

> As when upon a tranced summer night,
> Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
> Tall oaks, branch-charméd by the earnest stars,
> Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
> Save from one gradual solitary gust
> Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
> As if the ebbing air had but one wave, . . .

Never before had the words seemed so magical, and other verses hardly less wonderful that had long sung in our spirits came after them. Brian

gave us some translations from the old Irish, and recited one by a modern poet unknown to us which seemed specially to belong to that lonely mountain country to the west of us which the twilight had now hidden:

How far is it to Abbeyfeale? *'Tis far away!*
How runs the road to Abbeyfeale? *The road is rough!*
And if I walk across the hills till dawn of day
Will I be far from Abbeyfeale? *Ay, far enough!*

Once there were homes along the road to Abbeyfeale,
And I would find a place to-night where I may rest;
There was a farmer at Lisheen. *He died in jail!*
There were the lads at Meelin cross. *They all went west.*

The twilight comes, the rain begins, the hills are grey,
And whence come you along this road? *From Abbeyfeale!*
And is your dwelling far from here? *Ay, far away!*
And can you take me to your home? *I died in jail!*

But this evening made too calm, too beautiful a setting for the poem. We should have heard it when a winter day was closing in rain, and we were sitting in the firelight and listening to the wind keening round the old tower. Now the summer night enfolded us, stars were above us, and here and there lights from farmhouses or cottages glimmered beyond the darkened fields. The walls of my ruins were dimly visible and enclosed silent cloisters for friendly ghosts. The lap of water on the shores of the lough and under the tower beneath us, sounds hardly noticed before, became audible; and at last our own speech seemed an intrusion on our dreams and we became almost silent.

Jerry and I walked back to Ballyquin with our guests. Brian did not accompany us. He told me on my return that he was leaving next morning, and I guessed the reason for his departure. I concluded that he had said no word to Mary that went beyond the confines of old comradeship, but that he could not go on seeing her without speaking to her of Trenta, and this was forbidden. But next day when we were parting he said he would like Mary to know what he had told me,—that he had asked Trenta to be his wife. Mary's only comment when I told her was, 'Why could he not tell me himself?' but if she saw no reason for his reticence then she was fully enlightened afterwards by Trenta herself.

Mary, on one of the new horses from the Ballyquin stables, had just called for me next day, and I was preparing to mount my own cob and have a gallop with her when Trenta, in a motor car, drove up to the gates, where she alighted, and waving a hand in recognition walked to meet us.

'I don't want to meet her. I'll ride on,' Mary said to me; 'but—well, why shouldn't I? It might look rude.'

'Ah, Mr. Nicholas!' cried Trenta, 'you are surprised. You thought I was in Paris; but no! Grave matters have called me home. Our leaders are wanted. They have no time to amuse themselves on holidays. Isn't Brian with you?'

I told her he had left the day before, I thought for Dublin.

'Oh,' she said, 'that is why he did not get

my letter and telegram in Cork, but I will see him in Dublin to-night. Will you please present me to Mademoiselle? I am sure it is Miss Falcon whom I met long ago here and so much desire to meet again.'

Mary looked at her best on horseback in full daylight, just as Trenta's dark beauty shone to most advantage on a lighted stage. I felt proud in looking from one to the other of those two women to see how triumphantly Mary's beauty bore the comparison. She bowed in rather a queenly way, but without any sign of unfriendliness. I think it was her instinctive fine manners, which suggested an impropriety in her remaining on horseback while a visitor stood, that made her add, 'If Madame is coming in to rest after her journey I will postpone my ride.' With more insincerity I expressed a wish that she should remain for lunch.

'A thousand thanks,' she replied, 'but I am flying across the country. I have important news, and Brian is needed.' She stood stroking the neck of Mary's horse. 'You have been taking good care of my Brian,' she said to her. 'Our Brian I may call him, for I know you both love him, and I am grateful.'

Though she smiled there was a wicked flash in her eye which betokened anything but gratitude as she spoke. 'Yes,' she continued, 'I must get on with all speed. Apart from the urgency of my news I am impelled by my feelings. It is now weeks since I have seen my lover. You will understand my haste.'

She looked up, no doubt, to mark the effect her words had produced, and I had the satisfaction of seeing that there was nothing to be read from Mary's slight nod of assent. Trenta evidently saw that she must strike harder.

'You are both, I know, in Brian's confidence,' she continued. 'No doubt while he was here he told you of our union.'

'No, I cannot remember that he mentioned your name,' said Mary, who I saw was becoming impatient.

'He told me of your engagement,' said I. 'Allow me to express my congratulations.'

'Oh,' she laughed, 'did he say we were engaged? How funny! But perhaps he thought his family, Mademoiselle, would not approve. Marriage! perhaps some day, I do not know. Now we are lovers. We are rebels.'

'Are you not speaking of things about which you ought to keep silence?' said Mary coldly.

'To you,' replied Trenta, who seemed disconcerted for a moment by Mary's dignity, 'to his true friends I dare to be confidential.'

'Madame,' said Mary, 'you give me a confidence I do not desire'; and telling me she would go on in the direction of Ballyquin she bowed to Trenta and rode away.

'I am coming too,' I called to her, so angry that I made no further show of treating Trenta as a guest. 'Good-morning, Madame.'

Trenta's eyes shot anger in the direction of Mary, but she turned to me with a smile.

'Good-bye, Mr. Nicholas! I am afraid your

cousin does not approve of me, nor of my appropriation of Brian. Tell her that for the sake of his family I may perhaps some day marry him and make him respectable.'

When I rejoined Mary our conversation about Trenta was very brief.

'That shameless woman intended us to infer that she was his mistress,' she said.

'She is jealous and hates you and meant to wound you,' I replied.

'But do you not believe her?'

'Whatever may have already taken place that gives her a hold on him, I am sure of this, that if she will not be his wife he will have no other relationship.'

'Nick!' said Mary, 'I am very, very sorry for Brian, but I am going to ask you a favour:—Never speak to me about him again.'

CHAPTER XIX

FROM GALLIPOLI TO BALLYQUIN

In the genealogical tree of one of our old Irish families there is a break in the continuity of the record which is filled in with the explanation—*About this time occurred the Deluge.* Following its precedent in this commentary on the fortunes of my family and friends I now pass over the most momentous occurrence of our time with the observation, *About this time occurred the War.*

The war scattered us, broke into sharp angles the curves along which our lives had been moving, changed the world in which we dwelt. Even to tell about the scenes in the war which were shown to a single unimportant individual like myself would need a volume. I will not attempt it; and, indeed, not to recall but to forget that time is my desire. Something I must say of those whose fortunes I am following, something of Ireland at the outbreak of the war; and then I will pass, not to its end, but to the time, a year and a half later, when my own part in it was over.

So changed is the national outlook both in England and in Ireland that both countries have

already almost forgotten what that outlook was before the war. Looking back from our present point of view, we see on the one side the spectacle of the old brute forces of barbarism manifesting themselves with new malignity in the machinery of civilisation: on the other, the pretensions of Empire displayed to the world in the watchwords and inefficiency of democracy. Germany—capable, self-confident, envious—drilled and flattered by cynical materialistic rulers, threatened the freedom of the world in pursuit of her own ambitions. Britain, possessor of half the earth, unprepared to defend those possessions, accepting Imperial privileges and responsibilities without counting or paying the cost, 'Asleep upon her ancient deeds'—Britain stood an incentive to attack with promise of incalculable spoil to the aggressor.

But it is doubtful if the attack would have been made then, it is doubtful if the war in Europe would have been begun if Germany had believed that Britain would come into it; and it was the state of things in Ireland more than all else that made Germany believe that England would stand aside. This state of things—the arming of the Northern counties against the Act passed by the Imperial Parliament, the course of rebellion instigated by the Ulster leaders, abetted for political ends by the Tory party in England, and fostered by Germany herself, followed by the answer of Nationalist Ireland in the formation of the Volunteers, all carefully watched by Germany—this state of things, this menace of

war at home, made it seem improbable that Britain would venture on a war in Europe.

Events made foolishness of these calculations: Britain entered the war in spite of her difficulties. Ireland entered the war on the side of England, and came out of it hostile.

Centuries of misgovernment and injustice divided the two nations; countless alliances and friendships united the two peoples. Ireland's first movement sprang from her chivalrous instincts. In the hour of Britain's danger the wrongs were forgotten and the friendly ties were remembered. Moreover, it was the cause for which Ireland stood, the cause of freedom and the rights of small nations, that Britain was upholding against the tyranny of military power. Ireland's attitude, her response to the call to arms amazed even Englishmen, and in the early days she was spoken of by an English statesman as 'the one bright spot' on the scene. At the outbreak of the war our people's sympathies were almost wholly with the Allies, and the old counsel of 'England's difficulty, Ireland's opportunity' had few supporters.

It had some, and more than we knew. They included those desperate patriots, some of whom I had met in our gun-running adventure: Steele, Donovan, and others of the most active and intellectual of the extreme party to which Brian belonged. But they remained silent at the time, perhaps checked by the tendency which public opinion had taken. France was an old friend of Ireland; it had been an Irish tradition to fight on

the side of France against Britain; now Britain and France were allies. And France in Ireland was a beloved name. France and Ireland belonged to the same Church, Irishmen were often educated in France, France was a pioneer of popular liberty. But Germany! Germany was remote, unknown. Nowhere did the people of the two countries find a point of contact. The situation presented a difficulty to those who welcomed any enemy of England as a friend of Ireland, and they were perforce silent, waiting on events.

I was keenly interested to learn what view and what line of action Brian would take. My own course was clear. Britain was fighting in a just and great cause, and as a British subject it was my duty to offer my services. I admit I disliked having to do so. I detested the war from first to last; but my misfortune in love had made me a little careless about my future, and my duty was clear. I offered myself at once and obtained a commission in the Dublin Fusiliers.

Brian's position was very different. He repudiated any obligation as a British subject; he had fought against Britain in the Boer War, and had refused to ask for the King's pardon. He was associated with the extreme section of the Nationalist party, and though I had heard him express his disapproval of active rebellion, his chief reason seemed to be that he considered it would be futile. We had one short meeting before I left Ireland, and in the first words he said to me I learned his decision. True to his

principles he acted, as he always did, fearlessly and without compromise. 'This is no mere quarrel of Empires for predominance,' he said, 'it is a matter of *right and wrong*. Everything that Ireland can fight for is threatened by German militarism.' The outrage on Belgium had already taken place, and while allowing for the exaggeration of enmity and excitement, the reports of the Prussian methods of ruthlessness had kindled in his soul a passion of anger. He told me that he had decided to enter the French military service. In his schooldays in France he had been in a cadet corps, he had influential friends in the country, and, he added with a smile, he had done some soldiering in South Africa. He had no doubt about being accepted as a recruit. The British Service he told me he would not enter; he had sworn that he would not ask the King's pardon, and in any case he could not fight side by side with brother officers who repudiated the ideals of National Ireland, and would refuse to associate with him if they had known that he had fought in the Boer army.

His decision was one which proved his truth to his principles and his courage, for, as he hinted to me, it incurred the disapproval of most of his friends who were in the Sinn Fein movement. By doing nothing at the time, by waiting and watching events and seizing any opportunity that arose for forcing England to consider Ireland's demands, he would have retained his pre-eminence in the councils of the extreme party. By standing for the cause of the Allies which was

the cause of England, the enemy, he weakened his influence. He took a large view. 'By declaring against the tyranny of force now,' he said, 'we shall be doubly armed to claim our own rights afterwards. To do otherwise would be to sacrifice great principles for a mean advantage. Any man who believes in the greatness of Ireland's destiny, any man who believes that her ideal of freedom is inspired by God, cannot dare to seek her advantage ignobly.'

He wrote a letter, which appeared in the Irish newspapers at the time, expressing his views as to Ireland's duty in the war; 'and if England will remember, Ireland may forget,' it ended.

Neither of Trenta nor of Mary did we speak a word.

Before leaving for my training I had a good deal of business to settle in connection with Ballyquin and the farms. I promoted Tom Condon, the herdsman, to the position of working steward, and arranged about weekly payment of wages with the bank. Ballyquin House was shut up. Colonel Fremington never came over to Ireland, having received an appointment at the War Office, and his family returned to England at the outbreak of the war. Mary agreed to cancel the tenancy, and had in view the conversion of the house into a convalescent home for Irish soldiers. Aunt Margretta took up her quarters at the Castle cottage, and I was glad to think of her keeping my hearth burning in my absence.

I saw Jerry Hook and Mary in England on my

way to join my regiment. Jerry, who had offered himself for service but had been disqualified by his lameness and other physical defects, found work in the organisation of a shell factory at Mine Ferry. He was more cynical than ever about humanity, gloomy about the prospects of the war, but zealous and untiring in work. Mary was glowing with patriotic fervour, which I have no doubt gave some outlet for emotions aroused and repressed in her relations with Brian. She was elated by the loyalty of Ireland, enthusiastic about the splendid solidarity of the British peoples in their championship of a great cause. But it was the Fleet more than anything else that touched her imagination. The sailor, always loved by the women of our islands, had become a hero; the fleet stood as the guardian of the freedom of the world. Just before the mobilisation she had been at the great review at Portsmouth, a guest of the Admiral afterwards appointed to one of the chief commands ; and on this occasion she had encountered my illusive brother Bob and visited his ship, one of the newest battle cruisers, of which Captain Fremington had recently been promoted to the command. Now that Mary had definitely thrust Brian from her thoughts, it seemed to me extremely likely that Fremington would succeed in winning her; and though the prospect gave me little satisfaction, I could see no reasonable objection to her marrying that gallant officer. I adhered to my promise not to speak to her of Brian.

So the great upheaval parted us all for a time.

We were swept into currents of life over which we had no control, the currents of misdirected human activities, more cruel in their destructive violence than any iron laws of Nature that man has to face. The philosophies and faiths of yesterday were forgotten, the compulsion to action was all-absorbing. England was aroused, changed beyond recognition. The mildew that had gathered on her national life was cleared off, and her old virility had reappeared.

Ireland halted between two opinions. A wave of sympathy for the cause of the Allies passed over the country. It had no sustenance in national sentiment and died away, but there was no hostility. On the day I said good-bye to my home and friends there was no sign of the unrest I found on my return. The peace of the scene remains in my memory. Everything was going on as usual. One or two families who had sons in Irish regiments were anxious for news, but generally the war was regarded as a far-off inexplicable affair, in which we were but little concerned. 'Will England win, your honour?' a small farmer of the neighbourhood asked me, with evident interest but complete detachment.

My joining the army created no surprise. Nearly every gentleman in Ireland of military age had done so. Brian's decision to enter the French service caused more interest. The kindness of farewells, the prayers for my safe return cheered my departure. ''Tis a terrible war surely, but 'tis the will o' God,' was the constant comment. If I had said, 'No, it is not the will

of God, it is the will of man,' I should have been misunderstood.

I came out of Gallipoli and to the end of my part in the war with a shattered leg, thankful after what I had been through that it was not a shattered mind; the leg with care might still be serviceable.

In the month of January 1916 I found myself out of hospital on board a homeward-bound ship. I always rejoiced in the sea, and felt glad that it occupied three-fifths of our Globe, to be a perpetual fountain of refreshment and invigoration to the lands; but never before did it breathe such inspiration as on that day when I looked back over the waste of wild clean waters that spread between me and the land which had been to us a hell. And the ship! I saw her as a stately creation, born and shaped by man's contest with the elements, an emblem of his true vocation in contrast to the awful spectacle of his contest with his fellow-men. I had passed through the valley of the shadow of death, and life and hope were still mine. Many a good comrade, many a brave lad who had won my affection in those scenes when years had been concentrated in hours, were lying in their graves beyond that sea; and, though my eyes were full of tears as I looked back, my feelings of relief at my own escape, not the sorrow of what I had witnessed, were uppermost in my thoughts. The ship was a haven of rest. I took possession of my little cabin, revelling in its cleanliness, its privacy. I enjoyed the most trivial conversation, on every subject except the fighting, with my

fellow-travellers. I watched the sea and the sea-birds, and listened to the sound of wind and waters with untiring pleasure. And I had much to occupy my thoughts about those at home. A mail had been delivered to me before I left, which included a number of letters and newspapers, some of which, of long past dates, had been following me about from place to place. They brought news of the fortunes of some of those in whom I was most interested and also tidings that affected myself. There were letters from Aunt Margretta, from Mary, from Jerry Hook, and from Annette, but nothing from Brian. Among the newspapers were two or three, probably sent by Mary, and marked. The first of these gave some account of a naval engagement, the most brilliant from a British point of view that had taken place in the war, of which Captain Fremington was the chief hero. England was exhilarated, enthusiastic. Leading articles and even poems celebrated her sailors. Captain Fremington was made an Admiral, the youngest in the service. A later newspaper announced the engagement of Admiral Sir Cecil Fremington, K.C.B., to the Honourable Mary Falcon, only daughter of Viscount Grantry. Apparently he had gone direct to her from his victory and laid his laurels at her feet.

The letter from Mary was written before her engagement. It overflowed with affection and solicitude, and was generous in detail of news which might be welcome to one whose thoughts were of home. Of herself she told me that her

time was divided between Ballyquin, where she had established a Convalescent Home for Irish soldiers, and Mine Ferry, where she was taking care of the wives of workmen who were away on service. 'The women at home,' she said, 'are doing all they can but they want to do more—they want to express their devotion, to make sacrifices. Their brothers and lovers and husbands are away facing death, and they long to do something which can be *felt* by those who are absent. They would all like to be nurses at the Front, instead of typewriting in Government offices, or sitting on committees for providing comforts for the troops. Women always try to make heroes of the men they love, but now the war has done that for them; and I believe that the love that those who have fought and suffered will find when they come home will be a new inspiration in the country and the one happy outcome of all this tribulation.' It was just the ardent outburst I should have expected from Mary. In cynical contrast to it was a passage in a letter from Jerry. 'The women,' he said, 'are unbearable. A flood of sentimentalism has been let loose. Every woman wishes to be a nurse, a ministering angel, which is another name for a minx who wants to wear a becoming uniform and flirt with the doctors and patients. And all the Government offices are full of cheeky little hussies who spend half their time eating chocolates and writing love letters. We are wallowing in sex emotion. The young women, on whom normal times impose some recognition of modesty,

make the war and the return of heroes an excuse for letting themselves go like wantons. The sum being squandered on women's dress is fabulous, and the linen drapers are making fortunes in selling lingerie to the workmen's wives. One of our men, a countryman of yours, said to me: "You'd think 'twas four legs they had instead of two the amount of *them things* they do be buying." But I take off my hat to the men. I see all our workmen when they come home on leave: they get a week or ten days' leave, and come into my office with the trench mud hardly dry on their clothes. They have been through hell as you will understand, and have to return to it, and never once have I heard a man complain of having to go back. "It's got to be done," is what they say; but of course some of them find the Front an agreeable change from their homes.'

I was really more interested in the home news and gossip in the letters from Mary and Jerry than in their reflections. Aunt Margretta, Mary told me, was helping her in the Ballyquin hospital, and was also keeping the farm accounts. Her brother Dick, who had joined the army, had not been sent abroad, but had received an appointment as inspector of rations at the training camps. 'Not very glorious work,' she wrote, 'but, as the Rector remarked to my mother, "our heroes must be nourished".' Jerry also alluded to Dick Falcon's appointment. 'As a fighting man his girth was prohibitive, but he is doing gallant service. Clothed in khaki, he visits the camps and inspects the meat which is supplied by con-

tract. He is to be seen with a drawn sword prodding the joints, and even applying his nose to the suet.' 'The war is terrible,' said Mary, 'but I believe that a nobler world will emerge from it, and it has shown us that the heroic is not an incident but a characteristic in human nature.' 'This war,' said Jerry, 'would disgrace hell. Old wars were chivalrous and heroic; modern war is mean and brutal. It is a scourge. You might as well call smallpox heroic. No doubt smallpox also tests the endurance of doctors and patients. But as I said before, sitting safe in an office I make my bow of recognition of the services of you and your comrades who are bearing the stress of it; and if, please God, you come home safe I undertake to celebrate the event in your tower by getting drunk with you on some of the stuff you keep in the columbarium.'

Of course, the letters that occupied me most were those from Annette. The first of them had been written more than a year before, from the little Dutch sanatorium of Ceres, and was very hopeful about her sister's recovery. She gave a description of the place: a miniature town asleep in a hollow of the veldt ringed with rocky hills, broad silent passages—hardly streets—of detached white houses shaded with orange trees and bordered by water-courses. 'We get the Cape Town papers and read the war news eagerly,' she said; 'but the war is not realisable here in this remote place. I take long walks on the veldt, which is a mass of spring flowers now in October, and on clear still nights we hardly seem to be in the

same world I used to know, but to be lost somewhere among the stars. And you are probably in stirring and terrible scenes. I am most anxious to hear from you and to know where you are.' The letter began 'My dear Nick,' and ended 'your affectionate friend, Annette.' My hope, almost my only hope, had been that in absence the realisation of my love for her might have gradually awakened a response. There was not a word in her letter to encourage any such hope. It was just the letter of an affectionate friend, a good comrade. I would have thought it more hopeful if she had not written at all. However, my letter to her, the only one she had then received, had been written in a similar tone, though I did end by saying, 'This is written to Annette's cousin. I should write to Annette in a very different way, but I do not know whether Annette still exists except in my dreams.'

In a second letter, written just before I went to the Front, I did go a step further, and indulged in a little posthumous emotion which I was now glad to remember she would never know of. I said that there was always a risk of those who were in the fighting not coming out of it, and that if I did not return I wished her to ask Aunt Margretta for a sealed packet addressed to her, which was in my desk. This contained the lock of hair she had given me, and a few words which I should not care to transcribe. There was another letter from her of recent date, in which she said that her sister had almost recovered her health, but was to remain in South Africa for

another winter. She was returning to England herself as soon as she had made arrangements about a home for her sister, and she expected to be married immediately after she came home. That one statement, clearly intended to disillusion me if I retained any expectation of a change in her feelings, stood out hard and cold among words expressing warm affection, anxiety for my safety, and an almost pathetic appeal. 'There is nothing I wish for more,' she wrote, 'than that you and I shall be dear friends and be able to meet gladly and freely. If you don't feel that this can be we had better not play at being friends, but if you do it will make everything right, and far far happier for me. I am glad you did not write your letter to Annette for she is now only a dream.'

A dream! and was this the end of it? If I had not made more of a fight to realise it, it had not been because I was over-scrupulous or lacking in enterprise. If it had not been for the war I am sure I should have followed Annette to South Africa. By this time she was probably at home again, unswerving in her loyalty to the man she had promised to marry, perhaps married already. I believe the terrible scenes I had witnessed helped me to face my misfortune. I had been through them and was still alive, and was thankful; I valued life, even without Annette.

We had bad weather after passing Gibraltar, and I enjoyed it. We sailed with our lights out and in constant danger of submarine attacks, but I hardly thought of the peril. The sight of wintry

seas rolling beneath a south-westerly gale helped to wash out of my mind the memory of the sun-smitten, fly-swarming, death-stricken trenches. I was a passenger without responsibility, but I can understand the relief of our captain on that wild evening when those stormy seas were behind us and he brought his ship safely into Plymouth Sound.

I sent a telegram to Aunt Margretta telling her when to expect me, and travelled to London, where I arrived a few hours before the time for the departure of my train for Holyhead, very depressed by a reading of newspapers containing gloomy war news, lists of casualties, food prices, and leading articles intended to be cheering. I went to one of the great hotels for dinner, passing out of the dusk of dim streets into a blaze of light and gaiety. The place was crowded with people, nearly all young, most of them soldiers on short leave, and girls who were dining with them; men seizing these hours of respite, glad to forget the scenes they had been through, the scenes to which they had to return; girls perhaps too eager to make them forget. I understood the anomaly, that in these stirring and tremendous times the great and noble and beautiful things of life counted for little; the noblest poetry, the greatest music, the sublimest ritual, were without appeal; the brilliance of light, the fiddling of musical doggerel, the exhilaration of wine, the presence of women, met the need of the hour. Life danced, but would not think in the shadow of death.

And what a contrast was the scene outside!

The unknown, unrecognisable city that I saw on my way to the station, a place dark and mysterious, the moving lights of vehicles glimmering like the lamps of linkmen in eighteenth-century streets, the buildings standing up like the passes of mountain glens against starlit skies. I had returned to a world I did not know. I seemed farther from home than when I had been in the lines at Gallipoli.

I found my old world again when I arrived in Ireland. There was no indication of war time as I passed through the country; in truth, Ireland was not at war. Jamesy, with the pony trap, met me at Mallow station, a kind smile of welcome on his long face, succeeded by a look of concern when he saw me walking with a crutch. He made no comment on it, however. 'You're looking strong and hardy, thank God,' was all he said. We had ten miles to drive, and were well on our way before he gave me the only piece of important news.

'Herself opened your telegram,' he said. 'Miss Margretta is away in France. She went away last week to Mr. Brian, where he's sick in a hospital, terrible bad she said, after being wounded in the shest.'

The pain of my anxiety would have told me, if I had needed any telling, how close was the bond of affection between me and Brian. I asked Jamesy if my aunt had left any letter for me, and finding she had not I turned back to the town and sent a telegram to Mary asking if she could give me the name of the hospital, having

the intention of going to France myself. It was a melancholy home-coming. The February afternoon was dark and wild, few people were on the roads, the cattle were taking shelter behind banks and hedges, pools of flood-water stood in the fields, sea birds had come inland, and the cry of curlews gave a voice to the loneliness of the scene.

Jamesy rarely spoke except to answer questions. Had Miss Mary been over lately? She was then, till Christmas, looking after the hospital at Ballyquin. And the hospital? 'Twas full, thirty-five poor fellows destroyed by the war, with the best of everything to eat and drink and a motor car to drive them out and concerts in the evening. Was there any hunting this winter? Faith there was, but only two days in the week with the most of the gentlemen away. Only once did he speak unquestioned. After a long silence he asked me if the hurt I got in the leg was done by Germans. I told him it was the work of the Turks.

'Be thim haythens?'

'They are.'

'Master Nick,' he said, 'you was always a great shot. Tell me now how many of thim bloody Turks did you fall?'

To please him I gave him an estimate, probably not more inaccurate than those usually furnished in newspaper reports of enemy losses, and we again became silent.

I said at last that I hoped his wife was well. 'She do be having her health,' he replied, 'but——'

'Well,' I encouraged him to proceed.

'The timper will be better now you're home, Master Nick. When she have her hands full with the cooking and house tending she's a peaceable woman, but when you're away and there's no tidying and cleaning she turns on meself with "I'll bring you a kittle of hot water into the scullery the way you'd have a bat," says she, or "Go away down wid ye to the forge and get Mick Hickey to cut your hair," says she, or "There's holes in the sheets and I b'leeve 'tis your toe-nails, here's a scissors for you," says she, or the like o' that when I'd be thinking of taking a quiet smoke after me work.'

But Jamesy had a good wife and he knew it, and I knew the soundness of her heart. She still treated me as if I was a boy, and the motherly way she greeted me on my arrival was not unwelcome.

'Wisha, the poor crature!' she exclaimed, as she saw me hobbling up to the door. But the tenderness was momentary. 'You're home, thank God! but you'd no right to go, you nor Mr. Brian,' she went on with rising indignation, 'fightin' in wars that have no sinse, men that's wanted like you getting killed and lamed, and the country rotten with young rascals that's good for nothing else.' She took another glance at my leg. 'And how will you get up that twisted latther of a staircase?' she said. 'I'll make your bed up in the house below.'

I told her I could manage the ascent all right and went up, interested to see how the rooms looked now the work on them was finished. It

had been a pleasant task to my aunt to get them ready for my return, and the result exceeded my expectation.

The two bedrooms on the second floor, carpeted and equipped with familiar pieces of furniture from the house at Ballyquin, looked friendly and comfortable; in the library above she had placed my books in the cases; in addition to the tables made in the room by Tom Connors were some arm-chairs which must have been brought up the stairway with considerable difficulty; there were rugs on the oak floor and a fire of turf was burning in the great hearth.

I had tea in the cottage and afterwards took a turn round the place. In the stable, which had been built against the ruined wall of the old refectory, Jamesy was at work by the light of a lantern, and I noticed my hunter, Rebel, was in the loose box.

'He was out all the winter,' Jamesy explained, 'but I brought him in when I heard you were coming. He didn't get any oats yet, but he's just scooping a mangel. Will you be able to ride, sir?' I told him it would be some months before there was any chance of that, and once more he damned 'thim bloody Turks'.

It was a wild twilight and the wind seemed to be increasing in force as the darkness fell. In the distance there was a continuous sound of its rushing through the trees of Ballyquin, and standing in the shelter of my ruins I could hear it booming overhead and crying through the openings of old doors and windows. The river was

in flood, the stepping-stones submerged, and the waves of the lough were driven in little breakers against the rocks below the tower. I had seen evenings like this here before, but there was now a new feature in the scene: beyond the river over the water meadows, through the leafless swaying trees, shone a row of illumined windows where formerly one or two lights had glimmered. There was the hospital where once had been our home. The old place was being used for a fine purpose, and yet the change that had come to it added to my feeling of melancholy. Our old playroom, the faded drawing-room, my grandfather's bedroom, were no doubt now wards with rows of little cots; my grandmother's fragrant still-room a dispensary.

I sat up late that night meditating at my fireside, Rua, my old setter, lying on the hearth at my feet. I did not feel like a hero returned from the wars. It was like 'Colin Clout's come home again,' and there seemed little enough to come home to. My friend, the one man I deeply loved, was dangerously ill, perhaps dead, and the one woman I had given my heart to was pledged to marry another man, perhaps already married.

The philosophic mind should enable us to look beyond a disturbed present to a future which will restore order. I knew that I had much to be thankful for. I could appreciate the fact that my bones were not in a grave at Gallipoli. I knew that wounds are healed by time and that new hopes and interests would come into my life, but the reflection gave me no comfort. Philosophy

is a poor companion in suspense. If my friend and my love were already lost the voice of wisdom might have won a hearing, but now I was restless in uncertainty, and though I had only returned a few hours I was eager to be off again to see Brian, impatient to hear of Annette.

The wind keened in the chimney and beat round the solid walls of my tower with a sound of muffled drums. My shaded reading-lamp burned faintly, the room was lighted by the flickering hearth flames. I opened a casement and the sound of the wind was like the shout of an invisible host rushing through the night: I closed it and the sound grew remote and deep like the boom of breakers on a distant shore.

Hark 'tis an elfin storm from fairyland,

and mine was an enchanted tower, a place where dreams are treasured. She had said that the old Annette, the Annette I loved, was a dream. Well, let it be so! The pain that filled my heart was not caused by the loss of Annette. In that hour I knew that the friendship I had proved was more to me than the love that might have been. It was the thought of my life in a world from which Brian had passed that I could not bear.

CHAPTER XX

SUPER-FRIENDSHIP

It was springtime again. We are like children who love to hear the same old story repeated to them rather than a new one, in our welcome of the seasons' repetitions. We would not have other flowers, even if they were more beautiful, in place of the daffodils and primroses; if the lark's song were unheard, no sweeter song would recompense us. Children will correct you if, in telling a story, you omit a detail or make an innovation. Nature never disappoints us, but gives again and again the same old expressions of her immortal theme. Once more the blackthorn was in blossom, and a few early primroses were flowering in the shelter of the rocks of my wild garden. Building was going on all round me, the rooks in the trees at Ballyquin, the waterfowl in the reeds and rushes at the edge of the lough, the starlings in the crannies of the ruins, all were hard at work; and my own additions, the two new rooms, built, unlike the birds' nests, without expectation of a mate, were finished.

Even without the prospect of a mate, even in

those dreadful days when no end of the war was in sight, the springtime brought its own encouragement. 'I turned from what she brought to what she could not bring,' mourned Byron; but it is better to turn from what she cannot give to what she is able to restore. The rivers of life were fouled by man, but their fountain springs were unstainable, and no human folly or crime could touch the beauty and freshness of the new birth of spring. I found my heart responding to its influence. Hope, faith in a purpose that outlives our failures, awoke within me and lightened the darkness of that time.

I had been home more than a month. There was a good deal of farm work to be arranged, especially in consequence of the new Government order for the provision of additional tillage. I was also again at my book, and was much occupied in making observations for the section of it that dealt with nest-building. In reflecting on the perfection of constructive skill with which a young pair with no experience make their dwelling, I came to the conclusion that the bird and the nest are one—the nest a part of the bird, a detached post-natal development which it brings into being as easily as it grows feathers, or a man in due course displays a beard. . . . But I am forgetting. I was escaping from our troubled human world, and must come back to it.

Of those with whose fortunes I am concerned the tidings are briefly told. Annette was still in South Africa at the time of my return, some delay

having occurred in making arrangements for a home for her sister, but she was coming back by the first available ship. This I heard from Aunt Margretta, who had been regularly corresponding with her. Two days after I came home I received a telegram from France informing me that Brian was recovering, and asking me to postpone going over until he was well enough to travel. I went a fortnight later, intending to bring him to my tower; but he still needed nursing, and Mary, who met us in London and returned to Ireland with us, persuaded him to go to her convalescent home at Ballyquin. He had been desperately ill, and looked a shadow of his former self.

I have said that in spite of the evil days in which we were living, and my own misfortune in love, I was able to find enjoyment in the coming of spring, and in my peaceful surroundings. Aunt Margretta was a delightful person to live with; without the least apparent effort she made everything comfortable and every one contented; she gave the house a true homeliness; she made my prospect of old bachelorhood less lonely.

I should like to have taken her into my confidence, and very nearly did so at breakfast one morning when she received a letter from Annette, but when it came to the point some shyness or reserve held me back, and I kept my secret.

'I have a letter from Jerry Hook,' I began, concealing my eagerness to hear what her letter contained.

'And mine is from Annette,' she replied.

'It would have been nicer,' I suggested, 'if Annette had written to me, and Jerry to you.'

'If you like we'll exchange letters,' she laughed.

'You have no moral sense,' I protested. 'In these letters there may be confidences meant only for one ear. Jerry mentions you. He is looking forward to coming here in the summer and to forgetting the war while occupied in haymaking with you. He gives a quotation from Shakespeare:

> The lark that tirra-lyra chants
> With heigh! with heigh! the thrush and the jay,
> Are summer songs for me and my aunts
> While we lie tumbling in the hay.'

'Oh,' she exclaimed, laughing and blushing, 'I never tumbled with Mr. Hook in the hay. How ridiculous he is.'

'What does Annette say?' I asked, unable to restrain my inquiries any longer.

She looked through the letter. 'There's something about you in it, but nothing ridiculous. She's very anxious to hear where you have been and if you are safe. I think she must be very fond of you from the way she writes.'

'And is she coming home?'

She read on: '"At last I have found friends with whom I can leave Ellen," there is a description of all the family that you won't want to hear. Oh, here it is! "The ships are leaving for home at uncertain dates, but I expect to come on the *Norman*, leaving Cape Town on the first of March".'

'Then she's just starting now,' I interrupted.

'"General Fremington is in France, where he has a staff appointment, and I am going to stay with his family in London on my return. Our engagement will be announced, and his daughters seem pleased".'

I was glad she said *General* not *Walter*—otherwise there was nothing to please me in the communication.

'"As to coming to stay with you before we are married," she read on, "I know nothing I should like so much, but I cannot make plans until I get home".'

'Oh, you asked her here!' I said. 'How did you know I would want her to come?'

'Of course you would,' she replied, 'for I see you're devoted to her. I only wish she were going to marry you instead of that old man. Not old? He's fifty-five, and that's too old even for *me*, and she's almost a girl.'

It was then I nearly confided in my aunt, and a day or two later, when Mary was talking to me about Brian and the possibility of friendship between a man and a girl without affecting their loyalty to closer relationships, I was again tempted to seek the alliance of a woman in my troubles, and again I remained silent. I went over to Ballyquin daily on my business, and it had become my regular habit to pay Brian a visit at tea-time. I usually found him sitting in an arm-chair by the fireside and Mary with him. Her engagement and his pitiable condition had created a new understanding between them. Her attitude had

formerly been one of defiance against a man she was in love with; now she gave open affection, whole-hearted devotion to the friend she felt free to love. She knew that he loved her, and that he had dismissed all thought of any closer ties than those of friendship, and her generous nature prompted her to give this overflowingly. This seemed to make him happy, not to perturb him. I noticed the contented expression of his worn face when they were together, the quiet pleasure with which he looked at her when she was speaking. He was like a man who has found something he sought, not one who had lost something he had hoped for. He was making fair progress towards recovery, but hitherto I had avoided talking to him about the war or other disturbing matters, and he had not spoken to me about himself or his present political position in the country.

One evening immediately after Mary had left the room he said, 'You knew, did you not, that it was my relations with Trenta that held me back from Mary?'

'I did,' I replied.

'I felt bound to Trenta and would have married her. Her life and mine are now divided. She repudiated me when I joined the French army, and said I was fighting against her mother's people, and against my own country's freedom, and that neither she nor Ireland would forget that wrong.'

'I am glad you are clear of her,' I remarked drily.

'It grieves me,' he continued, 'that there are

some of our countrymen, old friends and allies, who have not forgiven me either; but I will not speak of that now. Trenta has swept past me like a storm. For me she is a storm spent, but not for others. She can only live in excitement. Perhaps you have read of her in the papers.'

During the war she had won the notoriety she courted. The name of the Irish prima donna had been familiar throughout Europe. I had seen allusions to her, quoted from American and German papers, which told of her passing from camp to camp, singing to the troops on the eve of battle; it was said she had visited the Irish soldiers who were in prison in Germany; and the latest report I had seen spoke of the enthusiasm her presence had created in her own country, the Austrian Tyrol, where she was with the mountaineer's army and had become betrothed to Cavigliano, the soldier poet who had risen to its command. I told Brian of the reports I had read, and he nodded. He had something nearer to his heart to speak of.

'You and I have had many an argument about possession,' he said. 'I always told you I could love a place that did not belong to me as much as if it did—your ruins, for instance.'

I remembered Annette's argument against this contention, and I had others of my own to bring in confutation, but I wanted to hear what he was leading up to.

'It is a severe test of that belief when it is a woman you love and not a place,' he went on, 'but I've proved it, Nick; I am able to love Mary

with my whole soul without jealousy or envy. I can love her and give her my devotion as I give it to Ireland.'

I attributed his arrival at this state of mind to his lowered vitality which allowed a temporary triumph of the spirit over the self in him; but I should have been sorry to say anything to question the stability of so noble a conclusion. Perhaps, too, I was wrong. Because I could not understand such a love myself, I had no right to question the possibility for a more heroic nature than my own.

He spoke with a quiet conviction, and went on calmly, 'Of course I knew you always thought we might have married. It was not Ireland, not my hostility to England, that stood between us. It was my own deed that drove me from her. I was the captain of my fate and I ran my ship on the rocks. I can feel almost glad that I have to pay the penalty. The punishment becomes an expiation. I am free now to love her without seeking any reward.'

'Well done!' I said. 'Nothing can dispossess you of that love'; but while I spoke I doubted. Now, while Mary was his daily companion and he was a sick man, the bond seemed possible; but when they were separated, Mary married, married to an Englishman, occupied with new interests, could it last? Would it not fade into a memory? And yet again came the after-thought that what seemed a dream to me might be realisable for these two.

Having in mind our old confidences I could

see that Brian had been anxious to show me how his heart had come through its ordeal, and perhaps he expressed his feelings with less reserve than would have been the case if he had not been weak and ill; but having told me so much he said no more, and on no subsequent occasion did he speak of his love for Mary and the understanding between them.

On these mild spring days Brian, as his health improved, was a good deal in the open air, sometimes with Mary driving in a pony-carriage, at others with me, taking such little walks about the place as his strength and my leg permitted. It seemed comical, perhaps rather pathetic, to find myself hobbling with him round the old home, inspecting the remains of the gardens we made when we were children or looking for birds' nests. We were both trying to forget what we had been through and hardly spoke of the war to each other. To him as to me the coming of the spring brought a benediction. The air was full of the earth's happiest sounds—the talk of rooks, the croon of wood pigeons, the songs of larks, the low deep tones of calling cattle in sheltered fields, the ripple of running streams, the stir of light winds in the trees; full too of its sweetest scents—of ploughed moist earth, and spring blossoms, and smoke of turf fires. We pottered about the place and enjoyed watching the farm work and talking to the men. Little things were our chief interest. One day I found a gold crest's nest in the ivy of a tree-trunk which already contained four eggs, and the number was finally increased to ten; some-

times we sat among the shavings in the carpenter's shop and watched Tom Connors making a new farm cart, or smoked a pipe with Uncle de Courcy, while he was tarring a sheep-net or repairing a pump-valve in the workshop.

My uncle was very happy in his employment, and his convivial outbreaks had become rare; but one day after a visit to Mallow, when though not drunk he had 'drink taken' as we say, we found him sitting on a heap of straw playing his Jew's harp to the dairymaids; and as the girls fled giggling and the old fellow dropped his instrument in confusion, we felt that it was unnecessary to go as far as Sicily to revive an idyll of Theocritus.

One day we met John Nihil, whom Brian had not seen since his return. Brian was his hero, but I do not think he had understood or approved of his going to the war. England for him was always the enemy. I remember his words at the end of our talk. 'You fought for the Boers, Mr. Brian,' he said, 'and you fought for the French. Please God, next time you fight 'twill be for Ireland.'

'Please God! it may not be necessary,' Brian replied. 'You have not seen what I have seen. I have been in pits full of dead men, and wounded men who cried to their comrades to put them out of their torture.' His voice grew stern and angry as he proceeded, 'I have seen kind-hearted men turned into devils by war. I have seen those who went into the war inspired by patriotism and noble ideals degraded to the condition of rats fighting in a sewer. I know what war is, and I

pray to God we shall find a way to our freedom without it.'

He turned away, agitated by the memories that his words had called up; agitated too, perhaps, by the knowledge of the unrest that was growing in Ireland, and the fear that bloodshed in our own country was more than a possibility.

With Mary I had many confidential talks in these days. She had been eager to know what I felt about her engagement, anxious for my blessing on it, perhaps sensible of a lack of enthusiasm in my approval.

'Of course, I know,' she said, 'that you always hoped that Brian and I would marry, but afterwards you saw yourself that this was impossible. Now there is a happy understanding between us that realises my belief in the possibility of true comradeship between a man and a woman who might have been lovers.'

'A sort of super-friendship,' I suggested.

'It is an ugly word,' she replied, 'but it seems to apply.'

In reflecting on the establishment of this ideal bond I thought of my own case and concluded that such an arrangement would be impossible between me and Annette. Nor, I thought, could it be possible between Brian and Mary if either of them were in love with the other. It would be unreal, and could not continue. No! for my part I felt that if Annette married another, even if she cherished the hope of warm friendship, as her letters showed, I could not bear to be in her presence and I would never wish to see her again.

It was a conclusion that looked selfish and ignoble in the light of the splendid triumph of self-forgetting love which seemed to have been given to Brian—but so it was and I did not wish it otherwise.

'What about the Admiral?' I asked Mary. 'Will he like or understand this comradeship?'

'Ah! you hardly know him,' she replied. 'He has the simplest and noblest of natures. He has faith in me, and would be incapable of jealousy of my friend.'

'How does he regard Irishmen who oppose British rule?'

'He is an Imperialist, but he has broad views about Ireland. He and Brian are types of the finest characters in both nations, and it is my dearest hope to bring them together and make them understand each other's views. Might they not help to bring the two nations together?'

Her eyes were bright; she was carried away on the wings of one of her enthusiasms; but I was sceptical. From the little I had seen of Fremington I was favourably impressed. He was straightforward and high-minded, but he was intensely, devotionally English, and what for Brian was patriotism I thought might be called sedition by him. I had no wish, however, to chill Mary's ardour, and told her I thought the scheme was splendid.

'Poor Brian,' she said. 'I never saw anything more pathetic. He fought for the cause he knew was right, and as a reward he has wrecked his health and lost his leadership in Ireland. But he

will regain it! Our people are great-hearted, and in the end what he has done will make them believe in him more than ever.'

As Brian grew stronger he became restless, and was evidently anxious about the state of Ireland. Mary told me that he was taxing his strength in dealing with his correspondence, and had had visits, one of them from young Fitzgerald and some of his fellow-students, another from his friend Donovan, the Labour leader, which had disturbed him. He was anxious to go to Dublin, and but for the doctor's prohibition and Mary's protests would have made an attempt to travel.

I discovered before long that he knew of unseen forces, of which I was ignorant, that threatened upheaval. I knew there was unrest: I marked the change between the Ireland I had left when I went to the war and the country to which I returned. Postponement of self-government; a widespread feeling that England was once more false to her promises and that Mr. Redmond and the Nationalist party had been duped; the emergence into the light, from the midst of a people whose political faiths and principles were undefined, of the Sinn Fein party, a determined and united minority openly hostile to Britain; the support of this party and the Volunteers in Irish America, where all that was bitterest in Irish feeling against England had been transplanted by exiles, and had grown to a hatred far stronger than that found in Ireland itself; the link made through America with Germany; the presence in Ireland of thousands of young men whose normal

emigration had been prevented by the British Government—fine material unmoulded, unemployed, discontented, ready for adventure or rebellion—all these agencies had been at work, and there had been no counteracting statesmanship, no movement either authoritative or generous on the part of England. Instead of a full measure of self-government, which was advocated and urged in vain even by the Irish loyalists who knew their country, Ireland was promised an emasculated measure of Home Rule coupled with the partition of the nation, and was at the same time threatened with immediate conscription. Ireland seemed apathetic on the whole, but in its midst was that minority which, by its union, had grown more powerful than the majority, and in its determination to strike for the liberty of Ireland did not hesitate to conspire with the Power which held that the only right to liberty was the strength to win it.

I saw there was a change in the country, but did not know at the time the strength of the gathering forces of revolt, and it was Brian who enlightened me. To both Mary and me he spoke frankly, knowing that we were neither of us misled by the fact of his having fought on the side of the Allies into believing that he had changed one whit in his hostility to English rule in Ireland. That he had given up his post at the University, jeopardised his political standing, and risked his life for a principle, had confirmed Mary's faith, as it had mine, in the greatness of his spirit. 'I *believe* in him,' she had said to me;

and I am sure he knew it, knew that we both believed in him, and that this knowledge made him give us his confidence without fear of misunderstanding.

Mary was bitterly disappointed at the lack of enthusiasm in Ireland for the cause of the Allies, and the failure of recruiting. I think Brian was disappointed also, and had cherished a hope that our country, by rising to the chivalrous height of forgetting old wrongs in response to a great call, would afterwards have been invincible in making her own demands. The country had not risen to that height, and if there had been any probability of it, the misunderstanding and mistrust shown by England would have checked it. Now the threat of conscription was leading towards catastrophe.

'Are they so misguided by their officials as to believe Ireland will stand conscription?' he said. 'It would mean rebellion.'

'They cannot understand this in England,' said Mary. 'I have heard them talking about it, asking why their married middle-aged men should be called up while our young men were hanging about doing nothing.'

'*You* understand,' exclaimed Brian. 'You see the difference. In England the national sentiment is behind the war. Their young men were bound to join the army. If they did not they would have been looked down on—the girls would not have spoken to them.'

'Women are always ready to plunge into vicarious danger.' I quoted Jerry Hook.

'The soldiers, the men in hospital here are not

heroes to the girls in Ireland,' he went on; 'but the girls make heroes of rebels against English law, and there will be rebellion against conscription. If they tried to enforce it in any of the Dominions against the decision of its own parliament there would be rebellion. We have not been allowed a parliament but we know the will of the nation.'

'No one wants to go to war,' I agreed; 'some feel they have to, our young men don't. I asked one of them who was snaring rabbits the other day why he did not join the army. He replied, "Where's our own?" And they have catch phrases: "A free gift from a free people," and the like. They are naturally glad of a good excuse for remaining alive.'

'What fools our parliamentary representatives have been,' said Brian. 'Redmond pledged our country to alliance in this war without consulting the people. He gave Ireland no chance of independent choice. Now England treats us as if we had no national will, and proposes to conscript us. And there is another danger. I know more than you can of what is going on. I hear the Government are preparing to disarm the Volunteers. I helped to start them and arm them,—and so did you,' he threw in with a smile, 'and we won't submit to it.'

'I suppose the Volunteers have got under the control of the extremists,' I commented, 'and the Government are alarmed.'

'The men in control will not submit,' he replied, 'nor would I. But I hope the Govern-

ment may be wise enough not to provoke violence. In any case there is grave danger. There are men among the leaders whom I know, who are my friends, who would welcome conscription because it would raise the country, and who may make the threat of disarming a reason for striking a blow while the arms are still in our hands.'

Though I thought at the time he over-estimated the danger, I remembered these words afterwards when events proved their truth.

'Is it possible? Is it believable,' Mary asked him, 'that these men, men who have been your comrades, could dishonour the cause of Ireland's freedom by using contemptible weapons to gain it?'

'These men,' Brian replied very gravely, 'see one enemy, the power that denies us independence. They believe we have a smaller chance of getting our freedom from a victorious than from a defeated England, and that though a rising might fail, it would arouse the country and prepare the way to final success. They believe that to wait tamely for such freedom as may fall to us like crumbs from the rich man's table, is to be unworthy of freedom,—that we must make it ours by our own deed. You remember,' he turned to me, 'what Steele said about the necessity for a "blood sacrifice"?'

'But you condemn all that,—you must condemn it, Brian,' said Mary eagerly.

'I condemn it, but not them,' he replied, 'for I know they are sincere. I believe they are mistaken, but I know they have no personal ends

to gain, no thought but the love of their country.' He seemed desperately anxious to make us see that these men were incapable of mean conduct. He named them one by one—scholars, workers among the poor, poets—lovable comrades. He was deeply moved.

'Whatever they are, they're fanatics,' I said impatiently. 'My mind is incapable of understanding their fanaticism. What is it but madness, even if it is faith gone mad.'

'I must go to Dublin. I must go immediately, Mary,' he said. 'They used to listen to me, I still have influence. Give me a cigarette, Nick.' I noticed how pale and exhausted he looked. 'Can I go to-morrow?'

'The doctor said a fortnight at the earliest, Brian,' she replied; 'but if you go on well it might be sooner. Nick would go with you.'

'I want you two—you are my best friends—to understand me,' said he. 'You know I believe that a blow struck now in collusion with Germany would dishonour our cause. I will do what I can to stop it. But if England provokes the blow, if without the consent of the people we are to be conscripted and disarmed, then, by God! I am on the side of my own people.'

We said no more on the subject. Mary as well as I had noticed his pallor. 'I'll see the doctor about your journey to Dublin,' she said. 'Now we'll have tea and I'll read you another chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*.'

Brian's strength increased daily, and with it his restlessness. A few mornings after our talk

he appeared at my tower and asked me if I had a room to spare, and could take him in for a day or two before he went to Dublin. 'I don't want nursing now,' he said in reply to my only objection to his coming, 'and a change would be good for me.' Mary drove him over in the afternoon. She made no protest and showed no surprise. 'I know you're tired of having a strict nurse like me, and think you can get round Nick and Aunt Margretta,' she laughed; but I noticed as she left that she looked very sad, and wondered if she was hurt at his wish to leave her care. She made me promise to accompany him if he persisted in his intention of going to Dublin, and said she might be there herself the following week on her way to England. Admiral Fremington was, it seemed, expecting a short leave at Easter, and was looking forward to seeing her in London. She spoke of the dangers and hardships our sailors were enduring, and of the duty and privilege of making their short days at home happy, and of showing them how they were honoured. I noticed that it was the duty and privilege, not the joy of the meeting that she emphasised; and the thought came to me that it might be possible she was thinking less of her victorious hero than of her poor stricken patient.

Pondering on this, an explanation flashed on my mind of Brian's leaving the hospital and coming to me. His weakness had produced a state of passivity which had made possible that relationship of self-forgetting love which he had told me bound him to Mary; but as his strength

had grown, was it not likely that a new vitality had entered into his love? With the beautiful girl he worshipped constantly near him and ministering to him, was it not probable that he began to feel the pain of unrealised love encroaching on his peace? Was he not determined to keep his love for her enshrined, safeguarded against any wrong of selfish desire, and had realised that this would be impossible if constant intercourse continued? Might this also be the reason why she had so readily acquiesced in his making the change? It was not the Irish rebel, it was the lover of Trenta she had turned from; and I wondered whether, if she had known the whole truth of his relations with Trenta, if she had known at the time when Fremington asked her to be his wife that the bond with Trenta had been finally severed and that she was the betrothed or the mistress of another man,—whether if so, her engagement to the gallant sailor would ever have taken place. She too may have felt the strain of the renewed and close intimacy with Brian, and have seen the desirability of bringing to an end those hours of familiar intercourse which, if they became too dear to either of them, might endanger the freedom of that bond of comradeship which they had made, and in which was recognised her loyalty to another man. If I was right, his conduct gave me one more proof of the nobility of his aims. If by his own act he had lost Mary as a wife, he was determined that no thought or word or deed of his should take from him or injure the love which had become to him a faith.

CHAPTER XXI

THE EASTER REBELLION

A few days before Easter, Brian and I went up to Dublin and took rooms at the Hibernian Hotel. I had some business to do, including an attendance before a Medical Board, and I saw little of Brian, who was occupied with his own affairs. The life of the city seemed normal, and in contrast with London the aspect of the streets had few suggestions of war-time. Of the Rising then imminent there was no indication: it was with amazement we learned afterwards what was going on under the surface, and when the outbreak came it was at least as great a surprise to Ireland as to the rest of the world.

The Rebellion, planned in association with the German Government, was arranged to take place after the arrival on the Kerry coast of a ship called the *Aud* laden with arms under the direction of Sir Roger Casement. A rising in the provinces immediately following the distribution of these arms, and the seizure of Dublin by the Volunteers and Citizen Army, were designed to synchronise; but the design was frustrated. The *Aud* was

captured by a British sloop, and Casement, who landed from a submarine, was discovered in his hiding-place near the coast and taken prisoner.

The Government, at last alarmed as to the possibility of rebellion, decided to raid the headquarters of the Volunteers and arrest the leaders; but, anticipating that there might be resistance, delayed action until the military garrison of Dublin could be reinforced. The news of the fate of Casement's expedition led to divided councils in Dublin among the leaders of the revolt. To some it now seemed doomed to failure, and postponement was advised: to others, and strongest among these were Donovan and the representatives of Liberty Hall and the Labour Citizen Army, immediate action was urged. These men appear to have believed in a victorious issue. Steele, McCarthy, and others, the idealists of the movement, also counselled action, though they had no hope of military success. To them it meant a sacrifice, a sacrifice that was needed to awaken Ireland and keep open the gates through which freedom would afterwards be won.

The Rising seems to have been planned to take place on Easter Sunday. On Saturday evening a meeting of the leaders was held at which the voice of those who were against action prevailed. The Volunteers had been under orders to assemble for manœuvres, and this was the signal for the outbreak on Sunday morning; but a notice was posted cancelling the order. The secret of the plans for Ireland's most considerable rebellion of modern times was amazingly well kept. Ordinary citizens

like myself knew nothing, and, though the Casement expedition had aroused the Government's suspicions, they entirely misjudged the situation and were thrown off the scent of immediate danger by the order cancelling the assembling of the Volunteers.

I knew that Brian had come up to Dublin with the object of using his influence for peace, but on the few occasions of our meeting in those days we did not refer to this. Once I met him in the street with Donovan, and on two or three occasions young Fitzgerald had called to see him at the hotel; but until Saturday evening nothing had aroused my suspicions that there were volcanic forces at work in which he was involved. I was anxious to get home, and that evening I sat up later than usual hoping to see him on his return to the hotel and get him to agree to come home with me. The only other occupants of the smoking-room were some young men, one or two of them in Volunteer uniform, Fitzgerald among them, who had evidently been waiting to see him also, for when he appeared they rose eagerly. Brian, after nodding to me and saying that he would be back in a few minutes, went out with them. He looked, as usual, pale and tired; but his step was firm, his eyes bright, his whole appearance fuller of vitality, more like his old self than it had been since his illness. Though, of course, I knew nothing of it at the time, he had just been through some of the most strenuous hours of his life at a meeting of the Volunteer leaders, where he had thrown the whole weight

of his influence and personality on the side of those who counselled the abandonment of the rising planned for the following day. They had succeeded in getting a vote for postponement if not for abandonment. They had won their point, however, not by separating themselves from their desperate comrades, but by pledging themselves to united action in accord with the decision of the majority. For the moment the rising was averted. Whether Brian that night believed the danger to be past or only delayed I cannot tell. The exhilaration which I noticed in his manner may have been due to good hope, or it may have been caused by the consciousness of a regained position, an acceptance of his old leadership and the successful exercise of his influence among the men who had been his comrades in the service of Ireland.

When he returned he ordered whisky for both of us and some biscuits for himself, explaining to me that he had had no dinner. The tenor of his talk over the pipe that we smoked before going to bed in no way surprised me at the time; but it afterwards struck me as being amazingly irrelevant to, and detached from, the tragic circumstances in which he stood. He spoke of scenes in our boyhood which I had half forgotten, of our grandfather and the neighbours who used to come to the house. 'They were kind-hearted people who sat round dinner-tables long ago,' he said; 'old country gentlemen who had bigoted views, but who were brimful of good-will and said merry and witty things. Tell me, do

you think they are gone? all dead and lost, in limbo, no trace preserved in the universe of their existence? '

'They may live in their descendants,' I said. 'It's hard to picture them outside the scenes they lived in. We know jolly little.'

' I have a feeling that everybody who has been, still is,' he said. ' We leave the past as we leave the place we were in yesterday when we go on a journey: it is still there.'

' I should like to think we might go back and have a look at them,' I replied; 'but with all speculations the wish is father to the thought.'

' No,' he said with animation, ' it is the other way about. Some truth, something realisable is always father to the wish.'

It was just one of our old discussions, in which as usual he showed a faith in life while I was merely critical. But that remark of his lingered in my mind. Was the wish father to the thought or the truth father to the wish? Did the idea of God, of a purpose, of divine love, come from man's hope and wish that these might be; or was it their reality that made their conception possible, the need for them so vital? It was a strange strain of thought that should have led Brian at such a time to talk thus. That sudden kind glance of his mind at the humanity of people so far removed from his present circumstances struck me afterwards as very odd.

I had intended to ask him if the mission that had brought him to Dublin was concluded and whether he would return with me at once to

Ballyquin, but my interest in our conversation put it out of my thoughts. Half an hour after we had gone upstairs he came to my room and asked me when I expected Mary in Dublin. I told him I had heard from her that she was coming the following Wednesday for a couple of nights on her way to England.

'I want you to give her this letter if there should be any—any political disturbance that might prevent my communicating with her,' he said; 'otherwise let me have it back. Keep it in a safe place.'

I was a little perplexed, hardly alarmed, but I took the letter without comment and bade him good-night.

'Good-night, Nick, old fellow,' he said. 'The danger I told you about is not over, and if it comes I shall be in it. I hope to God it may be averted. Whatever happens I believe that you and Mary will understand me.'

Next morning, Easter Sunday, I went to Wicklow to visit friends, and returned early on Monday to keep an engagement to lunch at the Kildare Street Club. Driving from Harcourt Street station I noticed nothing unusual in the look of the town—except that, it being a Bank holiday, the shops were shut and there were a good many people in the streets—until we came into Stephen's Green, where we saw that a barrier of vehicles had been thrown across one side of the square and the tramcars had stopped running. My jarvey and I exchanged comments. ''Tis some foolishness of them playactors of Volunteers,'

said he, 'in the way of a sham fight they have, practising to take the city.' 'But what will the military and the police have to say to it?' I asked in amazement. 'Oh, them!' he replied sarcastically, 'they don't be troubling their heads about us, and what's more, the half of them is away in England on holidays and the other half is at Baldoyle races.' Like every jarvey I have ever known he was a Conservative, a supporter of the authority of the people who paid most of his fares; indeed I have noticed that every one connected with horses is anti-democratic in his principles. 'Ireland!' he exclaimed contemptuously as we drove on. 'Ireland! 'tis an open-air asylum!'

On arrival at the hotel I saw evidence of agitation. Some people who had driven to Westland Row station had returned with the news that it was occupied by Volunteers and no trains were running. I inquired for Brian and found that he had paid his bill and left early that morning and his portmanteau was in my room. I had now become alarmed, and, forgetting my engagement at the Club, went out with the object of getting some information as to what was really taking place. The streets were full of people, and I noticed that instead of moving in the usual streams they were standing in groups. Passing through College Green I saw some young men, I believe they were members of the cadet corps, at the college gates, which they had just locked. At O'Connell bridge there was a movement from O'Connell Street of people in large numbers

hurrying towards the Green with quick backward glances. Here I turned aside eastward along the quay, which was almost deserted. A few men, half dressed, were standing in the doorways smoking; a few little shops were open, and at one of them, a newsvendor's, I stopped to look at a cartoon which was described as 'The noble German eagle plucking the hairs out of the mangy British lion.' Force of habit turned my eyes in the direction of the Custom House, and for the hundredth time I was admiring the proportions of the most beautiful building in Dublin when I heard across the water the sharp rattle of rifle-fire. Turning in its direction I caught sight of the Sinn Fein tri-coloured flag floating over the Post Office buildings. A moment later intermittent firing broke out in other directions. The Rising had begun.

In spite of the danger of remaining in the streets, and the casualties proved it was considerable, no one seemed to heed it. Every one was asking his neighbour what had happened. Wild rumours were abroad. I heard shouts of people who were hurrying past me. The Irish Republic was proclaimed, the notice was on the Post Office, twenty thousand Germans had landed on the Kerry coast, the Volunteers held the city, the Castle and the Four Courts were in their hands. These were some of the reports. Again passing Trinity gates I saw that they had been barricaded inside, and entering Dawson Street I heard firing in the direction of Stephen's Green. It lasted only a few seconds, and I walked on to the corner

of the Green. All was quiet there, but I could see men moving inside the railings, and on the road outside a man was stretched on the ground, apparently dead. There was no sign of police or military. The whole thing was like a fantastic nightmare. I went back to the hotel, where every one was asking questions or repeating a rumour. Sheer restlessness drove me out again into the streets. I was desperately anxious about Brian. I had a feeling which amounted to conviction that, having failed to get his views accepted, he had thrown in his lot with his desperate comrades. On the chance of getting enlightenment as to the state of things, I went into the Kildare Street Club, where I saw some members I knew by sight, none I knew personally. I noticed that no one was sitting down, but little groups of men were standing in the hall and in the smoking-room. I heard comments such as these: 'It can't last twenty-four hours'; 'The troops are on their way from the Curragh'; 'Don't show yourself in the streets in that kit, they're sniping every one in uniform from the roofs'; and one man ironically summed up the situation in the words of an English statesman at the beginning of the war: 'Ireland is the one bright spot on the scene.'

'Well, we knew the country was full of traitors who ought to be shot. Now we have caught a few of them and can deal with them,' was another remark.

'Didn't every loyal man in the country foresee this?' was the reply. 'Didn't we warn those

incompetents who rule us? By God! when the time comes to shoot these rebels, I'd like to see the chief secretary treated with a hangman's rope.'

I was angry and sick at heart; angry with what seemed to me the criminal folly of this inglorious revolt; angry with those men of my own class whom I heard denouncing it, and whose opposition to national aspirations I knew to be one of the causes that had led up to it; miserable in the realisation that Brian, and men who like him were men of honour and noble ideals, should have been drawn into the whirlpool and were doomed.

I went out again into the streets. They were now fuller than they had been, people who had been spending the holiday outside the city having returned. The firing had not driven them indoors. There was no suggestion of a popular rising, nothing to indicate the direction of their sympathies; no march of rebel forces through the streets, no acclamation of excited crowds. The evening fell on an amazed and bewildered city. As the hours passed the full seriousness of the situation became evident. The telegraph wires were cut, all communication with the outside world was shut off, and every important stronghold, except the Castle, in Dublin was in the hands of the rebels. A proclamation had been posted at their headquarters and other places in the city. It began:

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
OF THE
IRISH REPUBLIC

Irishmen and Irishwomen. In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives the old tradition of Nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

It went on to proclaim the Irish Republic as a sovereign independent state, and ended:

In this supreme hour the Irish nation must by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

The proclamation was signed by seven of the leaders, among them Steele and Donovan. Brian's name was not there.

What noble ideals it contained! How lamentable, how ignoble the occasion for their vindication! So it seemed to me that night as I lay awake listening to the rifle-fire and tortured by apprehension as to the fate of my friend.

Of the events of the horrible week that followed I have little to relate. They are not forgotten in Ireland. To me, the scenes of deadly war through which I had passed at Gallipoli were less sickening than that spectacle of inglorious street-fighting at home, of those beleaguered buildings which desperate men were holding in the name of Ireland against the forces of the

British Empire, while the great mass of their countrymen looked on. One by one the rebel positions were isolated, day by day they held out gallantly. Artillery was battering their defences, a gun-boat had come up the Liffey and was bombarding the walls of Liberty Hall and the Post Office. Fires broke out, whole streets became masses of unrecognisable ruins. The city was isolated, food supplies grew scarce, and looting of shops took place in many quarters. The electric light and gas had been cut off, and the darkness of the nights made the glare of burning buildings more conspicuous. Towards the end of the week the food shortage became more acute, and citizens were dependent on such stores as they had in their houses or could borrow from their neighbours. No vehicles were available for traffic. Deaths took place in the ordinary course, and burial was impossible. A doctor to whom I was talking at the hotel told me that a patient who had died in a nursing home had been buried in the back garden. At night no one went out, but by day in spite of the danger the streets were still frequented. Among people of the well-to-do classes, and it was these I most often encountered, the feeling was without question hostile to the Volunteers and the Rebellion. The soldiers were welcomed as friends, hailed as the saviours of the country from anarchy. The feeling among the working classes I could not so easily gauge, but apart from the hooligan element, which in a riot finds everywhere its soul's expression, little active

sympathy seemed to be given to the rising. The working people were interested spectators, ready, no doubt, to shelter a fugitive, appreciative of the courage of the men who were holding out, probably prepared to have supported the Republic if the rebellion had been successful, convinced that the venture was hopeless.

I remembered the discussion that took place on board Trenta's yacht when we were gun-running. Brian had said that until the spirit of nationality had become a uniting force throughout the whole country, until the ideals of the leaders had become an inspiration to all, until their work as leaders in awakening the people had gone further, the time for action had not come; and Steele had replied that that day would only come after those who held the ideals had led the way. 'There must be a blood sacrifice,' had been his word. Now the signal had been given and the country, as Brian had said, was not prepared to respond to it. The country was suffering from no pronounced grievance, no physical oppression which could arouse it to action. It was said in England, it was said by Irish Unionists, that if conscription had been insisted on in Ireland, and the Volunteers pressed into the army, the insurrection could not have taken place. I know that to be untrue. I am convinced that one of the few wise things done by the Government was its decision against conscription, and that if they had tried to enforce it the rebellion would have extended to the whole country. As it was, feeling the pressure of no

immediate wrong, not even compelled like England to send her youth to the war, Ireland was unmoved. And yet perhaps Steele's contention held good. Every revolt that had taken place in modern Ireland was the venture of a minority: every leader of those revolts had afterwards been acclaimed as a national hero. Steele felt that the national spirit could only be kept alive by the deeds of those who dared to give their lives for its preservation. He and his comrades dreaded a regime of beneficent British rule and material prosperity which might beguile the people into tolerance of a lost nationality, more than they hated any definite injustice the country had to endure. In this desperate act of insurrection I do not believe they expected military success. I believe they knew it was doomed to immediate failure, but were inspired by the conviction that it would demonstrate Ireland's nationality to the world and to herself, and bring the day of her independence nearer.

These are conclusions I have come to since the events. At the time I thought of little beyond the events themselves and the fate of Brian. How long would those doomed buildings which were being raked by machine-guns and bombarded by artillery hold out? In which of them was Brian fighting? Was he now alive or dead? If he were not killed in the fighting, what would be his fate? I think I should have been relieved to hear that he had been killed. In that troubled time I forgot my own misfortunes. I forgot that

Annette had probably arrived in England. I lived in the tragedy of Brian's fate.

On Saturday, less than a week after the outbreak, the end came. When the Post Office buildings had become no longer tenable its garrison surrendered.

> In order to prevent the further slaughter of unarmed people, and in the hope of saving the lives of our followers, now surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered, members of the Provisional Government present at Headquarters have agreed to an unconditional surrender, and the commanders of all units of the Republican forces will order their followers to lay down their arms.

This notice was issued by the leaders on Saturday afternoon. On Sunday morning the last of the garrisons had surrendered. In the spring sunshine the captives were marched to their prisons through silent crowds. I saw one company of them, smoke-stained, blood-stained, some in uniform, some in plain clothes, most of them young, some almost boys, some looking dejected, some with their heads held high. One or two names of leaders were whispered by the crowd as they passed, but these men I did not know. My eye was searching their ranks for Brian; but I looked in vain, for he was among the wounded who were being conveyed to the prison hospital in ambulances.

CHAPTER XXII

THE DAYS OF SUSPENSE

Mary came to Dublin two days after the end of the Rebellion, when the court martial on the prisoners was sitting, but no sentence had yet been passed. No one doubted that the promoters would have to pay the death penalty; but whether this would extend to all the leaders or only include the signatories of the proclamation was a matter of conjecture. I met Mary at Kingsbridge station. Canon Brennan, our parish priest, who was anxious about the fate of his sister's son, a student who was in the Volunteers; perhaps equally anxious about Brian, whom he had known and loved since his boyhood, had at Mary's suggestion come with her. I told them briefly what I knew of the situation, and that Brian's wounds were serious but not likely to prove fatal; after which Canon Brennan at once drove away to the prison hospital and Mary with me to the hotel.

Directly we met I was aware of some change in her, of some awakened force, of a concentration of vision and purpose which were new. She showed no sign of agitation. To her the Re-

bellion must have been a terrible thing, Brian's association with it an irretrievable calamity; but from the moment she heard of the outbreak she never seemed to have doubted that he was involved, and I think she realised even more clearly than I did that his choice was inevitable. Now, his fate was the only thing that concerned her: the saving of his life her one aim. To what seemed to me a hopeless task she gave her whole spirit, never pausing or letting herself be discouraged by its difficulties. All her faculties were quickened by the danger; her imagination outflew mine, and her judgement was as critical on every plan of action we discussed.

Her own plans were to some extent decided when we met, but she was anxious to know my views, and we had a little conference in the sitting-room I had taken for her at the hotel. She had influence, powerful friends in high places in both Houses of Parliament. How could it be used? We were agreed that it was out of the question to attempt to approach any one connected with the court martial, equally so to make any special appeal on Brian's behalf apart from his comrades. An appeal for a policy of clemency to all seemed the one hope.

'When do you think the sentence will be passed?' Mary asked.

'Immediately,' I replied. 'England is calling for strong measures.'

'We want time, oh! more time,' she said; 'but we have a breathing space. I must cross to England by the mail-boat to-night.'

'Public opinion,' I said, 'is our one hope. Individuals can do nothing. An evidence of public opinion in favour of generous treatment might affect the Government.'

'And the public opinion is created by individuals,' she replied. 'This is what I have in my mind all the time: the press, letters to the papers from people whose names have weight. It is to these people I am going.' She mentioned some great names. 'I don't know whether I can have much influence with them, but I shall do my utmost: I know the feeling in Ireland. I shall plead the political wisdom as well as the nobility of forgiveness,' she went on, I think rehearsing to me the appeal that had been shaping itself in her mind. 'Ireland is staggered and shocked by the Rebellion, but if these men have to die for their mad patriotism there will be a revulsion of feeling. The country will be embittered, and to-morrow these men will be their heroes. If they are forgiven Ireland will rejoice, and England will prove herself great to Ireland and to the world.'

I entirely agreed with her. I almost believed it possible that she would win a hearing. The appeal of so beautiful and eloquent a woman to men who knew and admired her could not be without some effect.

'First of all there is father,' she continued. 'He is known for his just and broad views. A letter from him to the papers. I believe he will do this for me. I shall reach Grantry to-morrow afternoon and then go on to London.'

'There is the French ambassador. Brian is in the French army.'

She leapt at the suggestion. 'I believe father knows him.'

'Though I am not sure that his having fought on the side of the Allies would count in his favour with the ambassador or the court,' I chilled her. 'They may regard him as a renegade.'

She almost smiled. 'You *will* always see both sides, even when things are desperate, and you ought only to see one side.'

'I am not offering to go with you to England to-night,' I said, 'as I could do no good, and I might be some use here.'

I mentioned Sir Robert Fingall, whose name was respected in England as well as in Ireland, and was uncompromised by party politics, as the only person of real influence I knew in Dublin, and I undertook to sound him next day as to the possibility of getting up a petition asking for leniency. We spoke of the Nationalist members of Parliament, of the heads of the Church both Catholic and Protestant in Dublin, of every one whom there seemed a hope of importuning. Suddenly Mary exclaimed, 'The best of all! I had forgotten Cecil. He is the hero of the British public. A letter from him to the *Times*, the letter of the victor of a great sea-fight asking for generosity to those who have done this wrong to his country—such a letter would move the whole Empire. And this I know he will do for me.'

Her eyes were bright, her cheeks flushed; she

was carried away by the vision of her lover's splendid intercession for his enemies, and the belief that he could save Brian's life; and to me also it appeared that the appeal of such a man might be powerful.

'Please God, he may have returned,' she said. 'He was at sea but expected back immediately, and was coming to London to see me this week.'

We had telegrams to send away to Lord Grantry and others, and were engaged in drafting letters to people whom we thought might be influenced, when Canon Brennan joined us. Neither he nor Mary had had any food since the morning, so I ordered tea and allowed the old man to take his time in telling his tidings. A man who has perfect faith in God and whose life of service to his fellow-men is bound up with that faith brings with his presence a Light. That light shone in the soul of the old priest and fell upon us like a blessing. In a world of confusion and suffering, in the tragic events that surrounded him his heart did not fail. He spoke no word of anger or condemnation: those who suffered needed help; the prisoners were his children. He had seen Brian for a few minutes. He was weak and in pain, but his wounds were not dangerous. They had not spoken of the Rebellion. Brian's chief anxiety was for some of the young men, his former students, who were among the prisoners. 'It was I first set them on the path that led them to this,' he told the priest. Young Fitzgerald was lying badly wounded in another ward of the hospital. The prison officials

and the doctors and nurses had treated the old priest with kindness and consideration.

We were anxious to know if there was a chance of our being allowed to see Brian, and he told us he had heard that no permission for the visits of friends had yet been given except in the cases of those who were not expected to live. The awful prospect of the sentence of death, not from the decree of nature but from the tribunal of men, confronted us. We did not speak of it, but I think the old man knew what was in our thoughts. 'May God's blessing be with you in your journey,' he said to Mary. 'Tell Brian when you see him again,' she said, 'that I received his letter. Tell him, Father, that I understood.' The tears were in her eyes as she said good-bye to him.

I went down that evening with Mary to Kingstown, and saw her on board the boat, which was crowded with passengers whose going had been delayed during the past week. Some of them had already put on their life-belts before the ship started. 'I shall be back in a few days,' Mary said as we parted. 'If Brian should be condemned he will want to see me before——' She left the sentence unfinished.

With her lights concealed the steamer sped away into the dark seas. Beyond, over the land she was going to there was darkness also; and, beyond again, darkness on those miles of battle front, darkness and silence until the dreadful dawn.

Not until Mary had gone did I fully realise how great was the resourcefulness, the initiative,

the courage she was showing. And I read the love that had given her the strength. Whatever happened her life was parted from Brian's, but I saw clearly now what I had always felt, that she loved no one on earth as she loved him.

I spent the next day calling on the only people I knew in Dublin who were likely by letters to the press or otherwise to have any influence on public opinion. Lord Liscarrol, who had known my father, a kind old gentleman, was sorry to hear of Brian's jeopardy, but stern in his condemnation of the Rebellion.

'Supposing it had been successful,' he said, 'supposing it had enabled the Germans to effect a landing! and, my dear lad, why the devil should we want to save the lives of fellows who have been helping the Hun and who have killed or wounded three or four hundred of our soldiers in our streets?'

My old mentor, Professor Blake of Trinity, was as little sympathetic. 'Forgiveness, Quin,' he said, 'is the privilege of the private citizen. Governments are under the obligation to execute justice.'

I spoke of the Irish temperament; its response to generosity; its quickness to revulsion of feeling in face of severity; and he replied that the Irish temperament had already been petted too much. My greatest hope was Sir Robert Fingall, but here again I was to be disappointed for he was away from home. Two newspaper editors, whom I endeavoured to see without much expectation of any result, were inaccessible, and I returned to

my dismal quarters at the hotel in very low spirits.

Mary left for England on Monday evening. On Wednesday morning Steele and McCarthy were sentenced and shot. An official notice appeared curtly stating that they had been found guilty and executed that morning. No details of the trial were given. On Thursday morning four more of the leaders were shot and a similar official announcement appeared. Looking back on that awful week and remembering how the tension grew, I am convinced that the revulsion of feeling in the country, the resentment against the executions, was in no small degree due to the prolongation of the suspense, the recurrent tragedy of the fresh announcements. Each morning the feeling of horror increased, even among those who regarded the sentences as inevitable. Who would be in the next list? Where would it end?

From information brought by Father Brennan I gathered that a condemned man would be allowed to see his friends. So far I had failed to get permission to see Brian; but though this may have shown that he had not yet been tried, my heart stood still every time the announcements of the executions were published, and my eyes ran down the list in terror. On Thursday morning Father Brennan told me that young Fitzgerald was dead. In the afternoon I had a telegram from Mary to say that she was returning to Dublin by the boat that arrived next morning.

I met her at Kingstown, taking with me a telegram from Admiral Fremington which had

been delivered at the hotel for her the previous evening and which I had opened. It was sent from Rosyth, and read: 'Your letter received; will endeavour to reach Dublin on Saturday.' A look of relief lightened her face. 'There may still be time,' she said. 'I have been counting more on what Cecil can do than on anything else. I knew I could depend on him to stand by us. He was at sea. The Admiralty told me where to communicate with him. Saturday—that is to-morrow. He will send his letter to the *Times* to-day.'

By degrees I heard that her mission had been disappointing. Her greatest hope had come through her father, who, while refusing, like almost every one else, to exert influence on behalf of the leaders, had undertaken to see the French Ambassador, whom he knew personally, and make Brian's service in the French army, the wounds that had nearly cost him his life, the plea for a special word of intercession in his favour from the Ambassador to the Government. I saw how abhorrent to Lord Grantry the rebellion must have been, and I did not wonder at the pride and affection with which Mary, who knew her father's views, spoke of what he had done for her.

The state of suspense about Brian's fate in which I was living from hour to hour put almost everything else out of my head. My deep concern for Mary's welfare did, however, set me thinking about her engagement, and wondering whether the bond between her and Fremington was of a strength to give her the support she

needed now or the consolation she might need to-morrow. Her love of Brian had been through renunciation, enshrined in her heart as an ideal. The reality of her love for Fremington I had no means of judging, but I felt sure that if he had not already won her heart he now had a splendid opportunity of doing so. He had proved himself a great and gallant Englishman: he was the hero of his country. An appeal from such a man, expressing for his country that quality of mercy which greatness can dare, would touch the heart of Ireland, and would kindle the imagination of a girl like Mary more than the glamour of his finest exploits. And the knowledge that it was his love of her that had inspired him to make the appeal would intensify its effect on her. If it succeeded and through him Brian's life was saved, if it failed and she was bereaved of her friend—in either case it was with love she would repay the man who had stood by her in her suffering.

Mary never doubted that he would do everything in his power to help us, neither did I; but I had far less hope than she of the result. I feared, too, that the sentence would be passed before there would be a chance of any public appeal taking effect; though I hoped, and Mary confidently believed, that before leaving England Fremington had sent his letter to the *Times*, and that it would be in print before we saw him.

Suspense, the fear of danger ahead which you can neither rush to meet nor fly from, is one of the acutest forms of torture, and to share it with

another does not, as with some sufferings, alleviate —it increases the strain. Throughout that Friday the knowledge of what Mary was going through added to my own misery. The hours we spent in trying to get permission to visit Brian helped us to get through the day. At the hospital we were referred to the military authorities, and then came the difficulty of discovering them. From the Castle we were sent to Kilmainham, from Kilmainham to Portobello; and here, at last, after filling in some forms, we were instructed to call again next day. Mary made a desperate attempt to see the Commander-in-Chief, but without success. So we wore through the day, I in shamefully low spirits which I tried hard to conceal from Mary, she unreasonably buoyed by expectation of some magic result from Fremington's appeal, and comforting herself also with the hope that her father's interview with the French Ambassador might save Brian.

On Saturday morning two more death sentences were given; but these were commuted to penal servitude for life. There was a third, that on Donovan the Labour leader. He was sentenced to death, but was too ill for the execution to take place. It was not until the following Thursday that we heard that he had recovered his strength sufficiently to sit up in a chair; and it was thus he faced the firing squad.

I remember every hour of that Saturday, and our acute state of suspense tempered by a glimmer of hope that Fremington might bring us some reassurance. As he did not come in the morning

we had no expectation of seeing him until the arrival of the evening boat due at Kingstown about six o'clock. We saw Father Brennan. He had been at the hospital with Brian for a few minutes, and told us that he was regaining his strength and was sitting up, but was restless, anxious to hear the fate of his comrades, eager that there should be no further delay in his own trial. He expected to be condemned, but seemed calm and fearless.

During the morning I persuaded Mary to walk with me for an hour or so in the Phœnix Park. We tried to talk of ordinary things, of work to be done at Ballyquin, of the completion of my book, of Aunt Margretta, of the spring flowers and foliage in the Park; but we could not escape from the one subject that gripped our minds. We always came back to it. 'You see how much more forward these trees are in the town than they were in the country,' I said; and she replied, or rather did not reply but spoke her questioning thought: 'Do they bury them in the prison yard or give the poor bodies to their friends?'

Early in the afternoon I was with Mary in her sitting-room anticipating a call from Father Brennan, when Admiral Fremington was announced. We were startled by the unexpectedness of his arrival. Mary, with an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, ran to meet him, and he took her in his arms regardless of my presence. He was in uniform, and I was struck by his fine appearance, the look of strength and reliability in his weather-beaten face.

'You remember my cousin,' Mary said, and he turned to me with a pleasant smile. 'Of course,' he said, giving me his hand, 'at Grantry, and before that at Gib. What a pleasant evening that was when we danced on the Admiral's flagship, the poor old *Adventurous*. She's at the bottom of the sea now.'

I gave him my congratulations on his naval victory.

'I had the luck to be in the right place at the right time,' he said modestly.

'We've been longing for your arrival, counting the minutes,' Mary said excitedly. 'We did not expect you till the evening boat.'

'I came over in a destroyer,' he explained. 'I got your letter and telegram when I came ashore at Rosyth on Thursday. I reached London on Friday and had business at the Admiralty which kept me until it was too late to catch the Holyhead boat, so I went down to Portsmouth and collared a destroyer. I have to go to sea again on Monday morning.'

'Oh!' she said with enthusiasm, 'it was splendid of you to come! You hardly know what we are going through.'

'Ah, yes. It has been a dreadful, a horrible business. We heard of it at sea. I wondered where you were and was anxious about you.' He gave a quick glance in my direction which I read as a hint that he wished to be alone with Mary; but I paused a moment before preparing to leave, anxious to hear what steps he had taken in response to Mary's letter, and feeling a little

perplexed at the absence of anxiety in his manner, which either showed that he had some message of good hope for us, or that he had not realised how desperately serious to Mary was the fate of the prisoners.

The next moment she asked for the assurance we wanted and were confident of receiving. 'You have written the letter to the *Times*?'

'No,' he replied. 'I have not done so. I have come over to explain why, to talk things over with you.'

'But why? Oh why?' she exclaimed. 'Every hour is precious. That means two days lost.'

'I have come to talk things over with you, Mary,' he said quietly. 'Perhaps we can do so better when we are alone.' He gave me a courteous smile in apology.

'No! Now, at once,' she said vehemently. 'We want Nick. He and I have been working together all the time. Have you thought of something better than the letter? Don't think me impatient. You hardly know what the suspense has been.'

'Let us sit down and talk about it quietly,' he said, placing a chair for Mary. He was evidently rather startled by the strong feeling she showed. He probably believed her letter to him to be the outcome of a sudden generous impulse, and that reflection and a talk with him would show her that his intercession was impossible. He knew that Brian was our cousin, that Mary and he were old friends, and that he had been in her hospital; but of her deep love for Brian I am sure he was

ignorant,—indeed it was only recently she had realised it herself. Fremington knew she was troubled, and came to give her his counsel and support. He had snatched the few hours he could spare from his duties to rush over to Ireland to see her, and had expected no trouble in making her appreciate the difficulty he had in complying with her impulsive request. He was obviously disconcerted. 'I hardly knew that you felt so deeply about this, Mary,' he said. 'You know there is nothing I could honourably do to serve you that I would leave undone.'

There was something in his tone that made me uneasy, and which seemed to arrest Mary also.

'Honourably?' She echoed the word as a question.

'There are actions which would be dishonourable to a man in my position which might not be so to another,' he said gravely. 'I am the servant of my country; in the time of my country's peril I have to think only of my duty. Nothing could I ask for better than the chance of serving you; but I would be dishonourable if, because you asked it, I should use my influence to counsel measures of weakness that might have disastrous results.'

'Oh no! No!' she cried. 'It would not be weakness; and coming from you who have shown your strength, who gave us victory, a call for forgiveness would crown your strength. And Ireland, as I told you in my letter, would respond, and England would be uplifted in the eyes of the

world. And it is not too late! You can write the letter now.'

He was silent, distressed by her emotion and the conflict between his desire to help her and his fixed resolution. At the time I was impatient, angry, unable to understand why he should hesitate; but subsequent reflection convinced me that it was his conception of his duty and nothing else that guided him.

'I cannot write that letter, Mary. Clemency, the utmost clemency, will be shown. I had an interview with a member of the Government in London. He told me they would go to the farthest limits in granting pardons and giving light sentences to the rank and file, to those misguided youths who were led into this foul rebellion; but to make this leniency possible there must be no hesitation about dealing with the leaders.'

He had risen from his chair and was pacing to and fro, speaking with strong feeling. 'I want you to feel that there is nothing I would not do for you that I dare do. I want you to see eye to eye with me about this. That is why I came over, and I must return to-night. There are times when clemency is impossible. There are crimes against the nation which no Government can leave unpunished. These rebel leaders have been guilty of a treacherous and dastardly crime—the stab in the back given by an enemy inside the gates who had the liberty of a friend, a thing to make a blot on the history of Ireland that can never be wiped out. The court that is trying

them will give them every opportunity of defence and will act justly.'

Mary was sitting with her face hidden in her hands. I doubt if she was listening to what he said. 'If I were to write a letter with the object of influencing the decision of the court,' he went on, 'it would be waste of time, and I should be ashamed of it. I have to think of my own colleagues. I know what our sailors feel. Supposing the rebellion had been successful and had resulted in the Germans getting submarine bases in Ireland, what would the men who are defending our shores think of a sentimental letter from me at such a time as this?'

Mary was speechless. She had become very pale.

'Can't you see, man!' I said hotly, 'that we don't care a damn about the niceties of the thing. We want to save Brian's life, and you can help us if you will.'

'Wouldn't it be impossible,' he said quickly, 'to ask for special consideration for an individual?'

'Yes,' I replied, 'it would. That is why the appeal ought to be general, for limiting the number who have to pay the extreme penalty. Some of the chief leaders have already been executed. It goes on. Every morning there are fresh announcements. Enough has been done. We want a strong man like you, whose voice will be heard, to tell England she is great enough to forgive her enemies without weakness.'

Still Mary did not speak. Perhaps Fremington thought he had impressed her and that she

was beginning to appreciate his point of view. Her face to me was ominous.

I saw a gulf of separation opening between her and Fremington. She had been looking to him as our champion, hoping in his strength, counting implicitly on his doing everything that he could to help us. By forgetting everything except her need of help, by showing himself fearless of criticism in an appeal for a great act of clemency, he would have won her heart for ever. Now he had lost it. At a critical time the deed is the man. Mary read him in that refusal to rise above his own rectitude. Her heart turned from him.

'Is there any special plea, anything you know that could be urged for Barry?' Fremington asked me.

'He used his influence in trying to prevent the rising,' I replied.

'And yet he took part in it.'

'He failed to persuade the others, and when it came to the point he stood in with them.'

'He might use that in evidence, if he could prove it. Have you any proof?'

'I have his word,' I replied.

'He would disdain to do this,' exclaimed Mary.

I agreed. 'Well, there's another thing. He fought in the French army.'

'His service for France!' said Fremington. 'I wonder if that will help him. He was trusted because he was believed to be on our side, and his conduct may be regarded as treachery.' He

spoke as though reflecting, and without considering the pain his words dealt.

Mary gave some exclamation which I did not catch.

'I wish to God I could do something to help without forgetting my duty,' Fremington continued. 'The only thing I can suggest is that no time should be lost in urging him to make a written statement, and call you as evidence, saying that he used all his influence with the leaders to prevent the rising, that he repudiates or deplores it, and is prepared to ask the King's pardon.'

'To excuse himself would be to accuse his comrades, to load them with added blame. He would never do that.'

'Oh no; we can trust his honour,' Mary suddenly flashed out. 'I admire him for standing beside his comrades. I am proud of him for it.'

Fremington looked at her in consternation. He turned to me. 'I should be very grateful to you, Quin, if you would leave us for a little while.'

I was about to do as he requested when Father Brennan entered the room unannounced, his face so grave and troubled that my heart beat fast in fear of his tidings. He walked across the room to Mary without looking at me or Fremington and took her hand. 'I bring bad news, my child,' he said. 'May God help you to bear it!'

'Brian!' The pallor of her face showed that she guessed what was coming. I too had no doubt. I seemed to hear the words before they were spoken.

'We must bow to the will of God,' said the priest. 'He may not live. The strain of the trial brought on hæmorrhage and he is prostrate.'

'The sentence?' I asked.

'It may never be carried out. He may not recover. God may save him thus from the worst.'

I wonder how Mary found strength to stand the shock without collapsing. I stood dazed and dumb. She and I were the two people in the world who loved Brian deeply. We turned to each other now.

'Oh Nick! Nick!' she said in a voice of utter desolation.

But even then her spirit did not fail. 'I must go to him, I or you,' she said to me. 'Oh, *I* must go. Father, will you go with me now?'

'I am deeply grieved for you, Mary,' Fremington said, speaking for the first time since Father Brennan's arrival. 'I will go and get a carriage for you.'

I respected him for his reticence, his insight in not attempting to play the part of supporter or natural comforter to Mary.

'He is perhaps too ill to see you to-day, my child,' said Father Brennan, 'but we will go to the hospital.'

'It is fortunate he is so ill,' said Fremington. 'It means delay; there is always the possibility of a reprieve.'

Mary gave him a look of thanks for that solitary word of hope, but beyond this she showed no recognition of his presence. In her hope he had failed her, in her despair she forgot him.

She was steeling herself to face death. Fremington had passed out of her life. She took my hand and pressed it, then she asked me to leave her with Father Brennan. 'I wish to pray,' she said.

Neither Fremington nor I spoke when we left the room, until we were parting at the door.

'I am grieved, deeply grieved for you,' he then said. 'If I had known it meant so much to Mary, I might—but it would have been useless. I will be back in an hour to see her. I must leave before midnight. If I get a chance I will have a word with the Commander-in-Chief. It might help to turn a scale.'

It was a tardy decision to attempt to help us, forced on him by the spectacle of Mary's distress, made for her sake too late to move her heart, even if she had known of it.

Half an hour later Mary drove away to the hospital with Father Brennan. I saw her as they were leaving, and was struck by the change in her face. Her colour had returned, she showed no sign of agitation, and there was a light, a purpose, in her eyes—a look as if she had made a great discovery or had a revelation. I thought it best to let them go alone, and I remained at the hotel to await her return. But she did not come back. She sent me word in the evening that she had taken a room close to the hospital, where she could be at hand to see Brian immediately if he asked for her. She had seen him, and hardly thought he could recover. The matron had proved herself a true friend.

Fremington left without seeing her again. I

called at her lodging later in the evening, but heard that she was sleeping and did not disturb her. After a restless night I rose at daybreak and took a long drive into the country. On my return I found a note from Mary, asking me to come over to the hospital. Brian was a little stronger and wished to see me.

When I came, Mary was standing with Father Brennan on the steps of the hospital. She smiled in greeting me. She tried to speak, but words failed her; when they came she was rather incoherent.

'How shall I tell you? You will be glad. You will forgive me for not telling you yesterday when I made up my mind. It was early this morning. Father Brennan arranged everything.' She held out her hand and showed me her wedding ring. 'He can face death better now,' she said. 'He will have a happy memory. He is happy; so am I now.'

'My God, Mary!' I exclaimed. 'Do you mean to say you are married, you are Brian's wife?'

'Father Brennan married us this morning.'

'Oh, is it possible?' I cried. 'Well done, Mary! Well done! Well done!'

Brian did not die. Three days later, when he was still lying between life and death, came his reprieve—the death sentence commuted to penal servitude.

Whether this was brought about by repre-

sentations from the French Ambassador; whether Fremington's talk with the Commander-in-Chief had had any effect; or whether the Government had realised that the public had grown impatient about the continuance of the executions and the delayed sentences, and thought it wiser to carry them no farther, I am unable to say. At the time I did not seek for reasons; I thanked God.

Brian recovered rapidly after the suspense was over. I saw him twice, and then went home. Mary remained in Dublin until the time when he was taken from the hospital to his English prison.

CHAPTER XXIII

IDEALS AND REALITIES

ANNETTE's letters from South Africa had made it clear that her affection for me remained constant; but the relationship on which she seemed to count, the comradeship she desired, was to me unacceptable. To be the friend permitted by the husband, the lover who suppressed his feelings, the creature in sheep's clothing who might at any time emerge as a wolf, was not a part I had any intention of playing. Women seem to have a faculty, or at least a wish, for the establishment of an ideal relationship when it is forbidden to love otherwise—I had seen Mary's essay in this direction with Brian—but there are few men to whom the achievement is possible, and I was not one of them. If my love had been a more absorbing passion I should no doubt have made another desperate attempt to win her: I would have been in waiting for her arrival at Southampton, or perhaps forestalled Colonel Fremington by meeting her ship at Madeira, and then have used every effort to induce her to elope with me. But I never thought of such

a thing. I must confess that at this time I had almost given up dreaming about her, and I deserved no pity as a stricken lover. No doubt, union with Annette would have given my life a new dimension; without it, I had occupations, friendships, and interests which would bring content.

On my return from Dublin I found that she had arrived in England. Aunt Margretta had received a letter from her, and there was also a note for myself. The letter to my aunt was written from the Fremingtons' London house. In it, after telling of her arrival in England and something of the voyage home, she said that as Colonel Fremington was in France and unable at present to leave, she and Mercy had obtained passports to go to Paris, where they were to meet him. They were leaving immediately, and she gave no address, but said she would write again on her return, and that after visiting her people in Birmingham she would accept my aunt's invitation to come over for a short visit, if we were sure it would be quite convenient. This was her note to me:

My dear Nick—It is nearly two years since I went away and twelve months since I had a letter from you. I have heard of your being wounded and of all your anxiety about your cousin Brian and the Rebellion, and I am longing to see you and hear how you have come out of it all. I have written to tell Margretta I could possibly come to you on my return from France, but I want to be sure you would really wish me to come before I decide.

Annette.

This letter left little doubt as to her feelings and intentions. Her taking the trouble to go to France to see Colonel Fremington instead of waiting for his return was in itself an indication of her devotion to him, and banished the last shred of hope I had cherished that time might have changed her feelings. And yet, I suppose some shade of hope did remain: otherwise I should not have consented to her visit. I replied to her in a note even shorter than her own: 'There is nothing in the world I look forward to so much as to seeing you'—leaving her to make her own conclusions about my feelings.

The peace of natural life, of old routine, of normal activities, pervaded our country-side. After Gallipoli and Dublin, after experiences of the sufferings man can inflict on man, how beneficent seemed the burdens which God has laid on him—the burden of toil, of winning daily bread by the sweat of his brow, the old contest with the earth for fruitfulness, where nothing that is won is taken from a fellow-creature, and comradeship grows in recognition of the common need. After scenes of destruction and horror, of unnatural excitement and misguided energy, the sight of men labouring in the fields, the dark furrows of the plough-lands fringed with the young green of growing crops, of the hillside where the sheep were feeding on the short grass between the grey limestone boulders, the sound of the clink of hammers on the anvil at the forge, of the bite of the chaff-cutter in the machine-shed, the fragrance of moist verdure borne on the wind,

the very smell of the heaps of dung in the cow-yard — everything that brought me close to Mother Earth became a refreshment to my spirit, and linked me and our homely daily labours with the purpose that sustains creation and renovates the life which we mar by our folly and misdeeds.

Perhaps it was reaction after the oppression of suspense, the immeasurable relief given by Brian's escape from a tragic fate, that made me so ready to rejoice in my homely surroundings, so willing to look forward to the future with hope, even though that future was to be without the love I had dreamt of. I almost wished that Annette was not coming to disturb my peace of mind by her presence; and yet as the time of her arrival drew near, the thought of seeing her made everything else seem dull in comparison.

We were at breakfast one morning about three weeks after my return when we had definite news. 'She writes that she will be able to come next week,' said my aunt, 'if it will be convenient to us. But Mr. Hook will be here, and we cannot possibly put them both up. Mary, of course, will be back, and she might give her a bedroom at Ballyquin, or perhaps Mr. Hook could sleep at de Courcy's cottage.'

'I have a letter from Jerry,' I replied. 'Perhaps a week's postponement will not matter to him. Let us hear what he says.' I read the letter aloud:

'I hope to be with you on Saturday afternoon. I am bringing Mary with me, or rather she is

bringing me, for you know what travelling with her means—everything arranged, guards and stewards and stationmasters bowing down to you. I have had no holiday since I was with you two years ago, and you may be sure I am looking forward to this. You can imagine the talk that has been going on about Mary. And what wonder! A notable beauty and heiress betrothed to the victor of a great sea fight, the hero of the British public, suddenly jilts him and marries in prison a condemned rebel. Isn't that stuff for gossip and paragraphs in the society papers? But she is perfectly serene, indeed radiantly happy. I always thought she was in love with Brian. Whatever her father felt, she has managed to get on the right side of him and they seem as good friends as ever. Lady Grantry was rather amusing about it. "Isn't Mary wonderful?" she said. "She makes the most outrageous conduct seem so natural." Lady Bullman condoles with the family—"Poor Lady Grantry!" she said, "it's so sad for her, when her daughter might have married a second Nelson with royalty at the wedding, to think of her being the mother-in-law of a young man in penal servitude, with broad arrows on his pyjamas." '

Aunt Margretta began to laugh. 'That's his invention,' she said; 'but really I don't think he ought to joke about poor Brian.'

'My sister Clara is engaged to be married,' Jerry continued, 'to a minor canon of Wells who appreciates her music. Mother is going to live with them, and when the war is over I mean to

give up business and get out of this place. I am thinking seriously of settling down in your country, which attracts me, though I thoroughly disapprove of it, and spending my declining years there in fishing and writing poetry. When I come over I will look at some of the little places you said might be had. I have saved enough to live on as a bachelor. Of course it is still possible that I might get married. So may you; but if I had an aunt as nice as yours to look after me I should never dream of such a thing.'

'There's a compliment for you,' said I.

'He never really means anything he says,' she replied, blushing like a girl. 'Well, it is clear we cannot put him off, and I am going to telegraph to Annette to come too. We shall find some way of dealing with them.'

We had several discussions during the next few days as to the accommodation of our guests, and finally decided that we could take them both in by giving Jerry my room and fixing my camp bed, if the weather were fine, on the roof of the tower; if wet, in the library. Happily the fine spell, which we so often get in the south-west of Ireland in the early summer, set in before our friends arrived.

A few days later, Mary, in her motor car, deposited Jerry, a dishevelled object, at our door. He had had no sleep the previous night, he had been sea-sick, he said he had caught a chill on the journey, and his good manners only partly concealed his irritability; but after he had changed his clothes, shaved, and found by using a clinical

thermometer that his temperature was normal, he came down to tea in a more cheerful mood.

'As a poet,' he said, 'I admire the sea, but as a traveller I agree with an American lady I once met. "Are you fond of the sea, madame?" I asked. "The ocean!" she replied, "I despise it."'

'The poor man looks half starved,' my aunt said to me; and it was no wonder, for it seemed that in addition to his strenuous daily work and war committees he had been doing duty at night as a special constable, and living on rations whose limitations his patriotic sister had rigidly enforced. 'White bread and real butter!' he exclaimed. 'How nice it is to live in Holy Ireland, and have a hostess without a conscience.'

Jerry was certainly overwrought and irritable. It was a day or two before he could forget or cease alluding to the surroundings he had left and the atmosphere of war. I asked him if he was doing any writing, and he replied that he had not written a line of poetry since the war began. 'Nor any one else,' he said. 'This war inspires no one. It is impossible to sing; some of them shout. I, God forgive me, can only croak.' He was contemptuous about his own inglorious work—'herding mechanics in a shell factory'; pessimistic about the war; sarcastic about lovely Erin—'trying to save her skin but breaking out in boils of revolt.' And all the time he was covering a deep anxiety, a sympathy with suffering humanity, under a superficial cynicism. He was bitter about the complacent confidence of people

like the Bullmans, who had objected formerly to spending as much on new fighting ships in a year as the war was now costing in a day. '"Hook"' (he quoted Cromwell Bullman), '"it used to be thought that a British ship was as good as two foreigners. That was good enough for Nelson and it's good enough for me"; but they've had to pay for it, and they've done it like men. Every young man in that family went to the war, and a good many of them did not come back. These people and all the parents in the country who have sons away are living in torture, afraid to open a telegram. Poor Hampton Bullman lost two sons, and the day he heard about the second he pulled himself together and went down to take the chair at his hospital. They're thick-headed Saxons, but there's great stuff in them, and I'll never make fun of them again.'

As on the previous visit, our surroundings affected Jerry happily and every day improved his health and spirits. Aunt Margretta was a woman whose presence made an atmosphere of comfort and tranquillity. She laughed at our foibles and at the same time humoured them. She refused to believe in Jerry's indigestion, but was careful about the food she gave him. She challenged his cynical remarks, but caught at the foundation of truth in them and restated it optimistically. For instance, when he questioned the sincerity of the blessing he had received from a beggar woman in exchange for a shilling, she admitted that the blessing was consequent on the shilling, and might have been had with slight

modification for sixpence. 'But wasn't it a splendid transaction?' she said. 'The poor woman wanted a shilling, and, what's more, she wanted to give *you* something. Giving makes every one happy, and she had nothing to give but her blessing.' Aunt Margretta was not clever, but she was wise. 'Your aunt,' said Jerry, 'reminds me of a remark I heard an old sea captain make about another lady. We were in the Solent with a lot of steam yachts and liners and other craft about, and a cutter had just crossed our bows: "She's *all woman*," he said, "same as yon cutter's *all boat*."' His enjoyment in her society was so evident that I asked Mary if she thought there was any chance that the two might make a match. She was amused, and said she had never dreamt of such a possibility.

'Aunt Margretta's only forty,' I said, 'and Jerry's thirty-seven, and she's really years younger than he. Look at her figure and her complexion. There isn't a touch of the old maid in her and he's a regular old bachelor; but she'd make him young.'

'Do you think she likes him?' Mary asked.

'She blushes,' I replied, 'when he pays her a compliment; and they chaff each other. I think the signs are very significant.'

We had been taking a walk of inspection round the place and after looking at the new turbine and saw mills had left Jerry at Uncle de Courcy's cottage absorbed in the examination of a book of flies. We were going on to the school where Mary wished to confer with the master

about the Irish language classes. The employment of labour on local industries and the revival of the Irish language were two of the objects in which Brian was most deeply interested, and Mary was throwing her heart into everything in which she thought she could further his aims. We naturally talked a good deal about him and of all we hoped to do when he was free. We shared the general belief that the full sentences on the prisoners would not be enforced, and that they would be liberated at latest when the war was over. A year, or two years more! What was that, with the whole future to look forward to?

'The reason,' said Mary, 'why I am not miserable in thinking about him in prison—in prison on a day like this!—is that I know that he is happy, and I know that in spite of being in prison he is getting well and strong. It shows what the spirit does for the body.'

'"Stone walls do not a prison make,"' I quoted. 'There are no bars between him and you now. Of course he is happy.'

'And I,' she said, 'I, too, never knew what freedom really meant until I was able to love Brian in the way I wanted to.'

I am sure this was true. I had seen how Mary had made an outlet for her emotions, found an expression of some part of her nature in her many ideals and activities. One by one these enthusiasms had occupied her and left her spirit unsatisfied. Now, in loving, in bringing her influence into the life-work of the man she loved,

she was able to find a full expression of herself, which was indeed her liberty.

'I firmly believe,' she said, 'that Brian will become the leader of the Irish people.'

'I should not wonder,' I replied; 'he has the brains as well as the magnetism.'

'And not by violent methods,' she continued. 'He will show the country that force can only be futile until the national spirit has grown strong enough to unite the whole people. It is on the force within us he counts. If that is fostered and guided it will be irresistible. The part he took in the Rebellion will be remembered, and on account of it the country will be the readier to listen to him when he shows it a surer way to victory than desperate revolts. Of course continued blundering and injustice may bring renewed rebellion, and restraint may be impossible. I pray that it may not be so. I shall use all my influence for peace; but, Nick, if he decides that it must be otherwise, I shall be with him. He is my leader too, and where he goes, I go.'

Heroics! and yet how perfectly true an expression of Mary's heart and mind. Her nature was heroic: she could have given heroic friendship, shown heroic restraint, but in this her spirit would not have found its freedom. Now she loved heroically, her love drew into its passion and bore on its flood every inspiration of her life, and in her love her dreams of independence were reconciled with the fulfilment of her womanhood.

'I wonder, oh, I wonder how long it will be,

Nick,' she said. 'I can hardly think of anything but the day that will bring him to me.'

I looked at the beautiful girl and pictured the welcome that Brian would receive. How glad should I have been to have found myself a prisoner with the prospect of such a reception from Annette.

'I suppose,' I said rather enigmatically, 'that ideals are damn fine things.'

'Why, what are you thinking of?' she asked.

'You always had an ideal of love,' I replied, 'and when that became unattainable you idealised friendship. Would that have satisfied you?'

'It seems difficult to think so now, but it would have been a great possession to us both; it would have made our lives better and happier.'

'To some women, women like you, such things may be possible,' I said. 'You and I are sworn friends because we're not in love with each other. If I were in love with you I couldn't help showing it and that would make the relationship of mere friendship impossible. To me such an attempt at friendship seems false and sentimental, and if it were pursued after one of the two were married, it might lead to disaster. I hate make-believe. If you have a disappointment you must put up with it and find the best consolation you can in something real.'

I spoke with an emphasis which attracted her attention.

'If I didn't know your affairs so well, Nick, you would have made me think you had had some disappointment yourself.'

Once before I had nearly told her my secret. Now I suddenly decided to do so. With a man, though he were the best of comrades, such a confidence would have been well-nigh impossible; but in a woman's friendship there is a tenderness, an assurance of sympathy, as from the touch of her hand, which asks for and rewards confession. I knew instinctively that I should be the happier for telling her and had no fear of her irritating me with her ideals. Her first remark when I told her the simple facts was the practical question as to whether I believed Annette would have married me if she had not felt honourably bound to another, and having my assurance on this point, she asked me if I thought Annette was happy in the prospect of her marriage. I replied that she had given me no reason to think otherwise—but that the continuation of our friendship seemed to mean a great deal to her. 'Perhaps something such as Brian's friendship meant to you,' I said.

'She must be very fond of you or she would not be coming to see you,' Mary said meditatively. 'And when she comes you will have another try to win her?'

'Yes, win her love or lose her friendship. Do you think I shall be acting dishonourably?'

'Not a bit,' Mary replied. 'He's a widower, he wants another wife, that's all. I wish she were not under these obligations to Colonel Fremington.'

She became thoughtful and then suddenly asked me, 'Do you say Annette was engaged to him when she came over here to prepare the house?'

'Of course,' I replied, 'otherwise it would have been all right.'

'I had hardly realised that,' she said, and then became silent for a few moments before she exclaimed, 'I shall have to tell you something that ought to be a secret. It would have been a secret. Colonel Fremington was with us on the yacht at that time and he *proposed to me*.'

This was indeed an amazing disclosure; it took time to grasp its full significance.

'Proposed to *you*,' I said in astonishment, 'when he was engaged to *her*?'

'He did.'

'What a fellow!' was my contemptuous comment. 'Did he tell you he was engaged? It was not announced.'

'Not he,' replied Mary. 'I think he was carried away by an impulse. It was moonlight. I had been very nice to him.'

'Yes,' I said, 'you can be.' I also remembered that moonlight when I said good-bye to Annette.

'He was rather ashamed, I think, afterwards. He said he had lost his head and laughed at the effect of sea air. We promised to forget it and be friends.'

'Not another ideal friendship?' I laughed, for the information had affected my spirits. I saw myself freed from any honourable scruples about trying to win Annette.

'If only she had known at the time,' I mused.

'She ought to know,' said Mary. 'You must tell her.'

'Of course I cannot tell her. It would be a mean thing.'

'Then I will tell her myself.'

'You will not,' I said. 'I positively forbid you to tell her. And you don't know Annette if you think it would help me. She would see through the motive. She would despise me for taking the advantage. It would stiffen her, she would defend him. No, Mary.'

'Which of us is the idealist?' she asked.

'Not I,' was my answer. 'But I know her and I know myself. I am going to do all I can to win her, and I should be crippled in the fight if I felt I was acting meanly. There isn't much chance, but anyway I can now put my whole strength into it.'

The explanation of what had happened grew clear to me. A gallant middle-aged gentleman who wanted a wife had been attracted by the charms of his secretary and had won her consent to marry him; a lady of better social position, an heiress, had proved to be equally, perhaps more, attractive, and he had disregarded his obligations; his disloyalty had been unproductive; no one knew of it; he had laughed at himself, and returned to his old allegiance; the episode had taken place two years ago. The conclusion I drew was that Colonel Fremington's love was not of a depth to give me any compunction about trying to supplant it, but that to take any advantage of the information Mary had given me was out of the question. Mary did not seem convinced on this point.

'It all depends on whether Annette is in love with you, though she may not admit it to herself,' she said. 'If she is not, of course it would be useless to tell her. If she is, it would just give her the justification she wants to break off her engagement.'

Her affection for me made her an unashamed partisan: Mary, the idealist, became a schemer.

'No,' I said, 'we'll tell no tales. I'm going to fight him as a gentleman.'

'Well, you may be right, Nick, and perhaps I should have known you better. I ought to have said nothing about it to you but just have told her myself. You see how inconsistent a woman can be. Her noblest sentiments are not so much to her as the happiness of those she loves.'

But though I had repudiated Mary's suggestion I confess that in those days before Annette arrived it recurred to me many times as a temptation. I am prone to self-examination, without, I think, any inclination to judge my motives too leniently. Would scruples of behaviour, I asked myself, stand in the way of a man whose love was a great and absorbing passion? Was I thinking more of my self-respect than of the outcome of a desperate venture? Might it not be a finer thing to be a good lover than a gentleman?

I suppose the answer must depend on the character and temperament of the individual. I decided in favour of being a gentleman; but I think my decision was partly due to the belief that had I done otherwise my loss of self-respect would have crippled me as a lover.

CHAPTER XXIV

CONCLUSION

I HAVE to confess that in these records, elaborated from my diaries and amplified from memory, there is also a disguise of fiction. It is unnecessary to say that the names of all the people and many of the places are not real ones; but in addition to this liberty I have had to use some ingenuity and even invention to prevent the identification of my characters with living persons. Of course I could not otherwise have published the book, and I have many reasons for wishing to do this. As to Brian, part of his story is public property, and parts of it, especially his relations with Trenta Byrne, having been distorted by his enemies to his discredit, the plain truth is to be desired. Of myself and the other persons whose fortunes I have been following the world has not heard and will not be curious to recognise. Yet, though I must conceal our identity I wish you to know us as fellow-creatures. As the old order changes, as old landmarks disappear, there is a longing in the heart to preserve the memories of the scenes and people we have loved. I have made some

pictures of our homeland which I would have others see, some portraits, especially those of two ladies, which, if I have done justice to the originals, I would gladly exhibit; I have known men and women, the courage and steadfastness of whose spirit, the faith of whose outlook on a stricken and confused world have strengthened my faith in humanity; and this faith I would have you share with me.

But in wishing to publish these records I have also another and less creditable motive — the somewhat vainglorious desire to express my opinions, to proclaim my likes and dislikes, and correct the views of others. This weakness is universal: we find it not only in our intercourse with our intimate friends, but in our meetings with acquaintances, even with strangers in a train, or club or hotel. The man wants you to know his views on politics, woman's suffrage, Holsteins, golf balls, alcohol, motor cars. He would detest the possibility of your mistaking him for a Methodist or a Catholic, a tariff reformer or a free trader, a dyspeptic, an altruist, or a Sabbath breaker—you never can tell which. He wants you to know *him*—a slightly glorified him, but still something very near his standard. Even the empty-headed and the base take a pleasure in expressing their folly or vileness; they are honest in not wishing to be thought much other than they are; and this sort of pride has been shown even on the scaffold.

What I have told you of myself will help you to make a true estimate of the value of my views

on the present state of Ireland, on the Rebellion and the character of those who took part in it. You would judge these views differently if you knew them to be those of the Editor of *The Freeman's Journal* or *The Morning Post*; just as you would bring a different criticism to bear on an essay by Lord Bacon if you learned that it had been written by the author of *Venus and Adonis*; or on a play by the author of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* if it were written by, say, the Dean of St. Paul's. If we are advised what horse to back by an interested person we hesitate; but when we get a tip in an evening paper from a God-fearing cocoa-boiler we are tempted to make a bet. Views do not stand apart like faiths or formulae: they must be read through the character and surroundings of their authors.

But indeed there is a further reason for my inclination to show to others something of my own heart. It is a desire for communication between this separate creature, which is myself, and that mighty heart of life which is not myself, but of which I am nevertheless a part; a desire for fellowship with many an undiscovered friend; perhaps with one here or there who may have faced the same difficulties, cherished the same hopes as I; with one who has found, or it may be missed, that gleam of light which I have seen.

And now having made my apology, and confessed that I have allowed myself some of the privileges of the writer of fiction in concealing the identity of those whom I have been writing

about, I feel freer to tell you before we part a few of the secrets of my heart. My story should perhaps have ended with the marriage of Brian and Mary; but having, I hope, interested you in my own fortunes, you will not wish me to say farewell without telling you whether I won Annette, or settled down to a calm and not unhappy life as a bachelor in my tower.

It seems to me now that I was unreasonable in entertaining any hope of winning Annette, for the possibility I had imagined of the knowledge of my love awakening hers and revealing her heart to herself had been made to look very small in the light of her letters and the fact that her first thought on her return had been of the man she was to marry, her first action to travel to France to see him. And yet it was true I did keep a hope. I had received an impression that she was not really in love with Colonel Fremington, and I could not forget those moments of our farewell. I sometimes thought that her arms would not have given me that welcome if the impulse had not sprung from the depths of her heart; but again I reflected that she probably had but behaved as a warm-hearted girl, sorry for the rejected suitor, and generous in her farewell to him. I expected that immediately I saw her I should know by her manner whether she was happy or dissatisfied, whether my presence perturbed her; but our meeting left me still in doubt. It was true that nothing but real affection could have lighted her face with such a smile as

she gave me, that my eyes held hers in a longer look than friendship expects, and that her colour came and went as we greeted; but almost at once it was evident to me that she was happy, and, indeed, in high spirits. If she had looked sad or were serious I should have rejoiced: her light-heartedness was my greatest discouragement. One thing I discovered in an instant: one look told me that I was still in love with her. The resignation, the content almost, with which I had been prepared to look forward to life without her were gone. I was her lover, and however small my chance of success I resolved to make a last attempt to win her. If I had been an heroic lover I should no doubt have seized the first opportunity of making my appeal; but my common sense restrained me, and I decided to wait for a few days until our friendship had prepared the way before I advanced further.

Even if I had wished to be alone with Annette there was little opportunity on the evening of her arrival, for she and my aunt had a great deal to say to each other and remained together. At dinner Jerry was very entertaining, and evidently thought Annette a guest worth his attention. After the ladies had left us he made some patronising comments. 'A very intelligent girl!' he said. 'She seemed a little shy with you, and apparently liked talking to me best.' I had also to submit to the discomfort of hearing his comments on her personal attractions, to having my attention called to the beauty of her hair, as though I did not already know every light in it,

and to the charms of her figure, while its curves were distracting me.

Next morning I had farm business to attend to, and in the afternoon we called for Mary and all went together to look at Kilbeg, a little place a couple of miles away on the river which I thought might suit Jerry. It was the same time of the year as when Annette had been here before, and the day was one of the most beautiful of the early summer. The furze bloom lingered; the whitethorn and crab-apple trees were in full bloom on the banks and in the hedges; the ripening meadows were full of sunshine; and a breeze from the south-west set the tree boughs swinging their young leafage, and filled the air with the cheerful sound of its *hail and farewell.*

Annette was as full of joy and youth and irresponsibility as the day. She was more like the girl I had known when we first met long ago than the graver lady who had pretended to be her cousin. My philosophy was worthless; I was captivated like a boy by her very superficialities. An attitude of seriousness, an appeal from her to my sense of honour or chivalry, a plea for a compact of abiding friendship, an indication of distress, might have given a check to my feelings as a lover; but if instead of trying to convert a lover into a friend she had aimed at doing the opposite she could not have succeeded better, for her elusiveness invited pursuit, and her lightheartedness gave her new attractions. Her gay spirits brought into play a hundred little charms of

manner and feminine grace hardly noticed before, just as the south-west wind of that summer day rippled the water, and sent waves over the meadow grass, and shook the scent from the boughs of whitethorn.

The prospect of having Jerry for a neighbour was delightful to both Mary and me, and we were all interested in our visit to Kilbeg. To save my leg I drove over in the pony cart, taking a tea basket with me; and, after our inspection of the pretty old thatched house and the neglected garden, we had a picnic on the river-bank and made our suggestions as to needed repairs, the disposal of the rooms, the place to put another bathroom, and so forth, to none of which except those which came from my aunt did Jerry pay much attention.

'Yes,' he said, 'it is just the place I should like. Perhaps, when the war is over—I had almost forgotten the war. And a week of my holiday is gone already.'

'And a whole day of mine is gone,' said Annette.

'You!' cried Jerry. 'Happy maiden. You have no toil, no anxieties to go back to.'

'Indeed I have,' she said, 'and in a week, too.'

We were all surprised.

'I have a job,' she explained, 'as secretary to the new War Pensions Committee in Birmingham. The chairman is an old friend. It is the sort of thing I can do.'

Mary and I exchanged glances: the information gave me a feeling of relief, inasmuch as it

showed that she was not going to be married immediately.

'And we must both of us make the most of our holiday, Mr. Hook,' she said. 'I think it is quite right to forget the war while we can.'

'I have no pricks of conscience about that,' said I. 'It will take me all the rest of my life to forget what I saw of it.'

'Oh, you have not yet told me——' she began, and stopped short, giving me a look which I found very comforting.

'Better left untold,' I replied.

'But we cannot possibly let you go in a week,' my aunt said. 'This work of yours is quite a surprise. You've not told us yet when you're going to be married.'

'I don't know yet myself,' Annette answered, laughing and colouring: and Mary discreetly changed the conversation by pointing out what a good view of the mountains Jerry would have if he cut down a few trees.

I wonder if Annette noticed how often I looked at her that afternoon. In absence I had found it hard to see her in my mind's eye. I retained an impression rather than a picture. Now all the half-forgotten details of her reality filled me with a delight which was also a pain. Either she was prettier than when she went away, or else I was more in love and thought her so: it came to the same thing.

Presently, when the others were looking at the walled garden, I found myself alone with

her for a few minutes. We looked at each other and smiled.

'Well!' said I.

'Well!' she laughed.

'I am glad to see you are so happy.'

'Are you really glad?'

'It depends on what is making you happy.'

'Being here and seeing you all,' she replied; 'feeling that we have left the darkest days behind us. You, I, Mary, all of us have been through so much, and now we seem out of prison.'

'I think you look younger and happier than when I saw you last—more like the Annette I knew long ago—my first love.'

'Whom you so easily forgot,' she laughed.

The others came in sight and we said no more. Perhaps she thought that her reminder of my old unfaithfulness was unkind, for she put her hand into mine for a moment. It may have been no more than an assurance of her comradeship, but it sent a thrill through my heart that made me forget everything else that afternoon.

Mary and I had a few words together on the way home.

'If she wanted to cool me down into a solid friend,' said I, 'she has no business to make herself look so nice. My heart is broken with that pink dress.'

'Pink suits her,' Mary agreed.

'Do you like her?'

'Who could help it?' said Mary. 'We have been talking about Brian. I had almost forgotten your telling me that she had met him

with you that time. She wins my heart. She just said the things about him that made me love her.'

'I knew you two would get on together,' I said. 'Did she happen to mention me at all?'

'She was extremely anxious to hear my opinion as to whether your wounded leg was bad enough to prevent the necessity of your going back on service.'

'If she doesn't care for the man she is going to marry, how can she be in such confoundedly good spirits?' I asked.

'Does she really know that *you* love her?'

'Of course she knows.'

'Then perhaps that's why she's in such good spirits. I'm sure she's not heartless; and could she be happy if she knew she was going to make you miserable?'

'She may not realise that. But you're splendidly encouraging, Mary, and whether it is wise or not I shall soon know. I mean to know this evening.'

The touch of Annette's hand had settled that.

Our dinner party that evening included Mary and Uncle de Courcy. Aunt Margretta managed things so easily that I did not trouble to inquire how Mrs. Begley, with only one maid and Jamesy, who waited at table, to help her, could get through the extra work entailed by the presence of guests; but I am sure she did not object to it and enjoyed the honour of contributing to the family hospitality. That Aunt Margretta had decided that it was to be something of a

festival, was foreshadowed by her asking if our cellar contained any champagne, and in a warning to Uncle de Courcy and me that we were expected to dress for dinner—an instruction which, though compromised in my own case by the wearing of an old brown velveteen jacket, was loyally carried out by de Courcy, who appeared in his hunt coat, the garment once brilliant, now faded and stained with age, which I remembered in my boyhood.

On our plateau of short grass between the cottage and the river-bank we assembled, awaiting Mary. Aunt Margretta, in a dress of lilac hue, which I had not seen before, looked so young and attractive that I was compelled to express my approval by kissing her. Annette wore a simple but beautiful dress, white, with a tone of warmth in its whiteness, like the glow of May blossom in the sunshine. I was aware of a change in the impression I received of her personality. It was like that which had come over the day with the falling of the wind and the approach of evening. Looking at her, arrested by the ease of her carriage, the poise of her head, as she walked to and fro on the carpet of short grass, it was no longer the light-hearted, irresponsible girl of the afternoon that I beheld, but a fair and gracious lady, beautiful in the serenity of her womanhood.

Presently Annette and I were detached from the three others as we paced the plateau. Rua, glowing red in the evening light, walked sedately between the two parties.

'What a happy scene!' said Annette, looking out over the quiet country to the far distance where the sunshine was lighting the green islands of pasture and tillage on the purple mountain slopes. 'If only one could forget that world beyond our horizon, and all those broken-hearted people.'

'You feel that the unseen trouble flows through the beauty and the calm that we see,' I suggested.

'Yes, but perhaps that deepens the beauty,' she answered.

She touched the borders of a mystery that I constantly felt near me.

'Isn't the beauty that remains unstained by the world's madness and destruction a sign to give us hope in an abiding good, a constant beneficence?' I asked.

'Then the war—the horror of these times—all you have been through has not darkened your faith in life?' she said, in a tone that showed her eagerness for a reassuring answer.

'Not a shade,' I replied. 'Why should it? The war has shown us no evil we did not already know. If the calamity has been greater than in former wars, it is not because humanity is baser, but men and nations are nearer to brotherhood and depend more on each other than ever before, and therefore their antagonism brings wider disaster. I believe men are better, not worse, than they were, and that every great hope of humanity stands firm.'

'Remains unstained like the beauty,' she said.

'Yes,' I continued, my spark of faith kindled by her sympathy, 'if anything had happened to the world that had broken man's spirit or soured his affections, anything that had taken away the hope of those who would serve their fellow-creatures, then we might despair. Or if any poison had come to the fountain springs of life and we saw the fruitfulness of the earth failing, the flowers we looked for coming no more in their seasons, the beauty that we see around us dimmed, then I should be a pessimist. But now I see nothing to fear but our own lack of courage.'

'You keep your faith in God?'

'In a purpose which is working against wrong, and which we ourselves can become a part of; in a Divine heart of life that cannot know defeat.'

'Oh,' she exclaimed, 'I am glad—how glad I cannot tell you—to know you have kept this faith. Though I was anxious when I heard you were wounded, I was really more anxious to know what all that had happened—all you have been through, had done to you—how it had left you.'

'Did you really care so much?' I asked her; and she answered, 'Would I have been here otherwise?'

Mary was in sight on the path beyond the river, the others were near us; our talk that had become so intimate was over. It left me happy in the feeling of a true bond, and from the calm and happy smile she gave me as she

spoke those last words, 'Would I have been here otherwise?' I found a message that at last gave me some real hope.

Mary had arrived rather late. She was radiant, laughing, elated. She called me aside for a moment. 'I have just had a letter,' she said, 'with some good news, the best of news for you. There is no time to tell you now. Margretta is getting impatient. You must wait until after dinner. Now you must take my word for it, and show your faith in my word by being a good host and helping us all to be merry.'

As the weather was so warm and fine my aunt had arranged that we should dine out of doors, and the table was laid on the grass between the cottage and the ruined walls of the cloisters. A nobler dining-room you could not have asked for, with its carpet of green, its roof of blue, and for enclosure the tower standing out of the lough at one end, and the cloister walls with their window traceries for pictures at the other. The wind had dropped or found no way to our sheltered spot, the smell of the whitethorn and meadow grass was in the air, and our music was made by the birds and the water: the distant sounds from the rookery, the nearer note of a sedge warbler, and the broken song of the river among the shallows. Like the foxgloves growing at the base of the old walls and the snapdragons on the ledges of the windows, the attire of the ladies brought a soft brightness to the grey ruins. Mary's was a surprise, for she wore a robe of old Irish design, white with embroideries of pale green, the brath,

or light cloak, flowing from the shoulders, the gold circlet of the head-dress round her brows.

'It would please Brian,' she said, laughing under our scrutiny.

'And I,' said Jerry, 'I, in our abominable social prison garb, am the only blot on the scene—a shadow among splendours, a black bottle white-labelled among scintillating decanters, a crow among birds of paradise.'

'And you, the poet, who should be the least conventional about appearance!' said Mary. 'Uncle de Courcy, you look splendid'; and the old fellow beamed with shy pleasure. He was like a child who is allowed to sit up with his elders.

As I looked round on our little gathering from one face to another, something in the occasion, in the scene, touched me deeply. Here were met, with but one missing, those people in the world I loved most. Brian alone was absent, for I saw so little of my brother Bob that he hardly counted. It was a small circle numbering only seven, but my world was within it. A great glow of comradeship filled my heart, a feeling that lifted my life outside and beyond itself; that extended from the known to the unknown, and gave a new meaning, a greater reality, to our hope in human brotherhood.

It was Uncle de Courcy's hunt coat that set us talking of old times at Ballyquin. Mary remembered it at a dinner party at which she had been allowed to be present when she was not more than fourteen. Aunt Margretta and I also

remembered that evening; and soon between us we were able to recall most of the guests, some of them from their graves, others still neighbours, doing so with that alacrity and interest which people show in reviving a common memory.

'Captain and Mrs. Spencer Boyle, Colonel and Mrs. MacMahon,' I said.

'Sir James Croker and Judge Beecher,' said my aunt.

'Of course!' I exclaimed. 'I remember. He was the new county court judge, and he told my grandfather how much he was looking forward to his showing him round our beautiful old place, and the old man replied: "I'll be glad to show you what's left of it, Judge, but a *man called Cromwell* gave the best of it to *people called Croker* and *people called Massey*." Sir James Croker was sitting on one side of him and Mr. Massey on the other; but of course they enjoyed the joke.'

'What memories you Irish people have!' said Jerry. 'From the way your grandfather spoke, the robbery might have taken place in his lifetime.'

'He was a terrible man, a terrible man!' said de Courcy.

'And who else was there?' I asked, as we laughed at this filial tribute.

'De Courcy's friend, Miss Crowe,' replied my aunt mischievously.

At the mention of the lady to whom my grandfather had tried so hard to marry him de Courcy turned very red, but he replied with spirit, 'You know right well that I couldn't bear the sight of her; and if it comes to that, me lady, what about

your bachelors? Jimmy Foote was there for certain, if there wasn't more of them.'

'Had she many bachelors?' asked Jerry.

'If you're not careful what you're saying you'll have to leave the table, de Courcy,' said my aunt.

We all laughed and told her she had had the worst of the encounter, and de Courcy drank a glass of champagne triumphantly.

'Mark you!' said Jerry to Annette; 'these names that mean nothing to you and me, what memories they call up to the others! How lovingly they dwell on them!'

'You have yours too,' said I. 'Every one has.'

'I don't know,' he answered. 'The Podsons and the Bullmans, the Goldney Flakes and the Clarence-Perkses—they don't seem to thrill me. No, I have to go to books for the names that give me a glow of romance—the Wardles and Arabella Allen, Joe Gargery and Newman Noggs; the disinherited knight, and Brian de Bois de Gilbert; Leather Stocking, and Poor Jack, and Mr. Midshipman Easy.'

His remark sent us off on a pleasant by-path where we all began recalling our old friends in books, but we came back to the actual and the magic of the names of places. I mentioned some of those around us, Kilcolman and Temple Mary, Ballynamona and Ballyvonaire, as among my enchanted names, and asked Annette for hers.

'Dunkery Beacon, Porlock Weir, Dunster,'

she replied. 'I had a pleasant holiday there when I was young.' She spoke quite casually, but smiled when I caught her eye. How could I fail to draw happy conclusions from her reference to the places where we had first met, unless I could have conceived her as heartlessly indifferent to my feelings?

'When the hospital can be closed,' said Mary, 'I mean to make Ballyquin exactly like it used to be. Margretta, you will help me to put every piece of furniture back in its old place in the rooms.'

'The same carpets with holes in them?' I asked.

'We'll have some new carpets and curtains,' she replied; 'nothing else. But I almost despair of being able to restore Granny's storeroom. No place else had such a glorious smell. Now what was it made of? There was honey and cloves and cinnamon.'

'And lemons,' I said, 'and ginger cordial.'

'And lavender,' said my aunt, 'and a bowl of rose leaves.'

'And mince pies,' I added, 'and raisins.'

'I'm afraid you won't be able to manufacture it again,' said Jerry. 'That aroma has gone with your own childhood. And if you put everything back, even the carpets with the holes, it would be a different place. It is we who change. We have travelled a long way from the places around us.'

'And yet how near to us the old scenes are, all the time,' I said. 'Suddenly, a smell or a

name or a tune brings them back—or rather takes you into them again—an easy step—only for a moment, I know. Then the way is closed again.'

'Oh, yes,' said Annette. 'You are not looking back, you are really there. And though it only lasts a moment, what a glow it leaves. It is like being a part of something immortal. It makes you feel that all the past still exists and we may discover it again.'

'I hope not,' exclaimed Jerry. 'I don't want to see my past again.'

'Why?' asked Aunt Margretta. 'Was it so dreadfully wicked?' at which Uncle de Courcy laughed immoderately.

'No,' replied Jerry. 'I kept all the commandments. Every one keeps most of them, but I kept them all. I never even coveted my neighbour's ass, nor his wife.'

'Then why not wish to revisit such a blameless past, Mr. Hook?' Annette asked.

'Because it would bore me,' he replied. 'My life has been dull—perhaps on account of its innocence. Now it might be interesting to go back and picnic amongst one's sins.'

'No, Jerry,' said Mary, as we laughed at his absurd picture, 'you are not in your proper surroundings at Mine Ferry.'

'We become part of the place we love, and it of us,' I said. 'We sow our lives in it, we expand in it.'

'And I have not expanded with the borough boundaries of Mine Ferry,' said he.

'In places we don't like,' I continued, 'we shrink into our shells.'

'You must buy Kilbeg—you must!' said Mary.

'Oh yes, do!' cried Annette, and Uncle de Courcy nodded vigorously, but my aunt was silent.

'I never possessed anything but a few books,' he replied. 'It would be interesting to own a bit of the earth — that stretch of river, that slope of moor behind the house — I think my heart ought to fill so much. Nick says you ought not to possess more than your heart can fill.'

'And Brian says you can love a place just as much whether it belongs to you or not,' Mary added.

'There we always disagree,' said I. 'It's his democratic enthusiasm. Most people have no possessions, and he likes us to realise that the best things—the beauty of our country, for instance—belong to all who can love them. Now, if you buy Kilbeg, that stretch of river will be ours too, because we can admire it.'

'You may share the beauty with me,' replied Jerry, 'but the fish will be mine. That's where possession comes in.'

The sky was glowing in the sunset and its illumination of our banquet hall fascinated our attention. Lights of rose-red clouds with little spaces of exquisite pale blue between them shone through the empty tracery of the west window of the abbey, restoring with transcendent magnifi-

cence the glory of its vanished stained glass. A suffused mellow radiance touched the grey cloister walls, and up against the sky my castle with its yellow lichened masonry catching the full splendour of the setting sun stood like a tower of gold.

The quiet beauty of the scene must have touched our spirits, for gradually our merry talk subsided, and when the time came for the ladies to leave us we had become quite a silent party. Before they went I whispered a word to Mary, and then rose and made a little speech.

'There is one friend whom we have all been thinking of this evening, and wishing he were with us, and I now propose his health—"The truest lover of his country, the readiest helper of his comrade, the kindest, bravest heart I ever knew."'

'Brian!' shouted Jerry, springing to his feet. 'Brian!' we all cried, and Mary had never looked happier or prouder or more beautiful than she appeared then, with the tears shining in her eyes.

A few moments later when she left the table she beckoned to me to follow her. 'Will you walk back with me?' she said. 'I shall be ready to go very soon. Here is the letter from Mercy Fremington I spoke of. You may read it now. You will find it was worth waiting for.'

I went up to the roof of my tower to read my letter and skimmed through one or two passages that did not interest me. Then I came to this:

'You have probably by now seen Annette Williamson and possibly heard something of our visit to Paris. You know the strong feeling I had about Father marrying again. It was hateful to me to think of any one taking Mother's place, and I admit, too, that I don't want any one but myself mistress in our house. But I made the best of it, and as I really love Annette I would rather have her than some stranger as a step-mother. Well, immediately she came back I saw she was in trouble and she confided in me. She told me that she had found out that she didn't love Father enough to marry him. Perhaps she met some one in South Africa or on the voyage, some young man she fell in love with. I didn't ask her. She said it would be wrong of her to marry Father without loving him, and she must see him at once and tell him. Of course this pleased me immensely. I told her she was doing the right thing, and volunteered to go with her to France. She was dreadfully distressed about her own disloyalty or inconstancy, but was as firm as a rock in her decision. Father behaved so chivalrously that I believe he almost won her back. It is in the blood. You had a chance of seeing it in Uncle Cecil, whom you tried rather severely. Nothing showed me this more clearly than Annette's telling me that she didn't feel the help he had given her and her family as a burden, that she didn't want to repay him the money he had given. Poor old man! I am not the least sorry for him, but I'm glad to hear he is to have a C.B., which will cheer him up. On the way

home Annette had the decency to try to conceal her elation. There *must* be some one else or the escape from a match which most young women who have to earn their living and are not too well connected would regard as a triumph would not be so welcome. Isn't it a mercy that the engagement had not been announced in the papers? I should like to come over and stay with you next month, especially if your nice cousin Nick, who I am sorry to hear was wounded, is there. . . .'

And there was another page or two.

I went through it a second time to make sure I had missed nothing.

Behold the shepherd on a morning that is overcast surveying the skies, doubtful whether the clouds will descend later and blur his fields in rain, or peradventure the sun burst through the mists and overflow the hills with golden light! He hopes and fears; but meanwhile the fortunes of the day have been decided in the unseen balances of the atmosphere. So had I been surveying the overcast prospects of my life; so now did I see the light of heaven flooding its horizons. And it had all been settled in the unseen balances.

When I descended from my tower I found that Uncle de Courcy had disappeared, Jerry with my aunt and Annette were sitting in chairs at the water's edge beneath the tower, and Mary was standing beside them waiting for me to walk home with her. Our day of wind and sunshine and racing shadows and tossing blossom had

folded its wings like a bird; the outline of the mountains stood out clear on skies that still had a memory of the sunset; the water glimmered in the afterglow and all the land was quiet.

'Oh, Nick!' said Mary when we were out of hearing of the others. 'How perfectly splendid! How happy this has made me!'

'It's too good to be true,' I answered. 'I can hardly believe it.' I was meeting imaginary foes, as lovers will. 'She's broken it off with Fremington, but it doesn't follow that she would marry me. There may be some one else. If not, why should she talk to me about friendship?'

'I don't believe she did talk about it,' said Mary, laughing at my apprehensions, 'though she may have written about it before she was free. Cannot you understand? It's perfectly clear to me. How was she to know the reality of your love or that you had not changed? Two years is a long time—you might have fallen in love with some one else—it was months since she had heard from you, and your letter said little. How could she come and throw herself at you and say, "I am free"? Of course she wanted to find out first if you loved her. Now I know you are dying to get back to her. I won't let you come much farther.'

It was true. My heart was beating hard. All that was me, body and spirit, was thrilled with expectation of that meeting which was before me.

'And she burned her ships,' said Mary.

'She didn't wait to find out if you loved her before she broke off her engagement. It was to be you or no one. How glad I am that you were firm in not letting me tell her that Colonel Fremington proposed to me.'

We were half-way across the fields, nearing Ballyquin. 'I think I'll go back now,' I said.

She smiled as if amused, and took my hand. 'My dear old boy, good night and good luck! This has made me really happy,' she said.

'You are the best friend a man ever had,' I told her.

'And so are you,' she said. 'Brian knows that, and I know it. It will make him glad to hear my news, for I am sure about it. I am going to write to my poor boy. I keep him near me all the time.'

I may not describe to you a love scene in which I myself took part: you will agree that it would be unseemly of me to invite you beyond its threshold. You have but to look into your own hearts and picture the meeting you long for more than anything else on earth—or, if you are no longer young, to recall the hour that once sped your footsteps to the trysting-place, and you can make the scene your own. The night was falling as I turned homeward: a faint glow remained in the west, a glimmer of light on a stretch of the river beyond the darkening fields, and the first stars were shining over the mountains in the east. I was on my way to find Annette, but I had not to seek far. I caught sight of a white figure on the river-path and knew she had come to meet

me. When we saw each other we both hastened our steps, and when we met there was no doubt or hesitation. Without a word from either of us she came into my arms.

It was an hour, perhaps two hours, afterwards that we came down from the roof of my tower. It was late and we expected that every one would have gone to bed, but on entering the library we found Jerry and Aunt Margretta there. We were relieved from any obligation of explaining our absence by the obvious confusion of the other couple. A moment later Jerry collected himself. He rose, and with an air which was almost ceremonial made the following speech:

'My dear Nick,' said he, taking my aunt's hand, 'I have an announcement to make to you. As the head of your branch of the family I wish to ask your approval and consent to my becoming your uncle.'

'Good heavens!' I laughed, in wild spirits, seizing his hand and then kissing my blushing aunt. 'How glorious! And look here. I also have an announcement to make. Aunt Margretta, let me present to you your future niece.'

The two women found expression for their feelings in each other's arms. Jerry and I stood grinning at each other.

'Well,' he said, 'I call this damned funny!'

After we had bidden each other good night I went back to my tower and smoked a pipe under the stars, having little inclination for sleep, and much food for happy meditation. It is good to

choose an auspicious hour for parting, so let me here say farewell to those who have been friendly followers of our fortunes. Though our work is not yet done, and though adventures may still remain for us, you have accompanied us to one important stage on our journey and leave us with our fortunes in love decided. And if I do not take you with us as far as that day when the prisoner was freed and Mary and her husband were united; nor to that other day, not far ahead, when I brought home Annette as my wife, and Uncle de Courcy got drunk, and old Jamesy, in revenge for much previous chaff, with a grin in every wrinkle of his face, asked me—the weather being fine—if he should make up my little camp bed on the roof of the tower; nor yet to another day when Aunt Margretta became Mrs. Jerry Hook, I have said enough to assure you that no misadventures came between us and the realisation of our happiest dreams.

I hope we may meet again. You will hear of Brian in the service of our country; perhaps of Jerry Hook as a poet; and if you are interested in natural history you may read my book *The Speech of Birds*, which is shortly to be published. Now in the starlight on my tower I bid you farewell.

I stayed there thinking of the past and dreaming of the future until the night was far spent. The lights which had shone on the grass from the windows below were extinguished one by one; the air was still; the only sound in our countryside was the ripple of water lapping below the

tower. Under the brilliant sky of the mid-summer night the earth lay dark with black outlines of woods and hills clearly defined, and in the north above the mountains lingered a faint radiance which was a memory of our golden day passing into the dawn of to-morrow.

THE END

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